The Homophile Is a Sexual Being: Wallace de Ortega Maxey's Pulp Theology and Gay Activism

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When the Universalist minister Wallace de Ortega Maxey published his magnum opus, *Man Is a Sexual Being*, in late 1958, he pulled few punches. Religion as practiced in the United States, he declared, "must be discussed and exposed as a decadent force in its present guise." A key reason for Maxey's critique was the theological impulse to sacralize sex, abstracting it from its earthy human qualities and situating it within an imposed moral rubric. "At least the Greeks and Romans took their sex seriously which we in America refuse to do," he wrote. "Frankly we are afraid to take it seriously." Instead of the coy American hypocrisy of sexual regulation combined with a fetishistic consumer culture, Maxey advocated an existentialist approach to sexuality in which nothing that happened between consenting adults could violate God or nature. In perhaps his most forthright moment, he proclaimed the "basic concrete fact" that "there is never anytime I am not a Sexual Being."[1]

None of this placed *Man Is a Sexual Being* beyond the pale of contemporaneous existentialist theology or post-Kinseyan sex radicalism in the United States. Other thinkers offered similar critiques, often more substantive and better argued. One place Maxey's bold, even strident, tone would *not* seem to fit, however, was the early homophile movement, which placed great priority on a politics of respectability that favored seeking accommodation within existing systems and belief structures. "The discursive limits of assimilationist or integrationist strategies," Nan Alamilla Boyd has noted, necessitated the downplaying of "the sex in homosexual subjectivity."[2]

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[1] Wallace de Ortega Maxey, *Man Is a Sexual Being* (Fresno: Fabian, 1958), 17, 105, 97.

[2] Nan Alamilla Boyd, *Wide-Open Town: A History of Queer San Francisco to 1965* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 176.

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The membership pledge of the Mattachine Society (initially established as the Mattachine Foundation in late 1950), for example, adopted in July 1951, required members to affirm that they would "try to observe the generally accepted social rules of dignity and propriety at all times—in [their] conduct, attire, and speech."[3] In his book, Maxey aggressively rejected those governing concepts. Yet Wallace de Ortega Maxey played a central role in the Mattachine Society from its very early stages through its decline in the mid-1960s. Indeed, considering the upheaval surrounding the much-observed 1953 schism in Mattachine leadership that saw many of its founders ousted by a new guard, Maxey may provide the single most continuous thread of core Mattachine activism. It is therefore striking that in the now-voluminous historical scholarship on the homophile movement he appears in only the briefest of roles and is often entirely ignored. Among historians, only James Sears (in his biography of Mattachine leader Hal Call) and David Hughes (in an excellently researched biographical profile) have devoted sustained attention to Maxey.[4]

When Maxey published *Man Is a Sexual Being*, he was on the brink of being formally elected the Mattachine's director of research. Though the book did promote the Mattachine Society, nowhere in it did Maxey acknowledge the extent of his involvement in the early gay rights movement. Instead, he published it as something of a stealth homophile, in the vein of the parahomophile publishing efforts Martin Meeker has located in the Dorian Book Service and Pan-Graphic Press, run by homophile activists who held themselves at arm's length from the movement proper.[5] Further contributing to *Man*'s obscurity, Maxey issued it from his own press, Fabian Books, housed in Fresno, California, where he had been running a local Universalist-Unitarian church. Of the couple hundred books Fabian and its sister press, Saber, released, *Man Is a Sexual Being* was the only work of nonfiction; the entire rest of their collective list consisted of tawdry pulp

[3] Mattachine Society Membership Pledge, ratified 20 July 1951, folder 5, box 1, Mattachine Society Project Collection, ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles (hereafter cited as MSPC).

[4] James T. Sears, *Behind the Mask of the Mattachine: The Hal Call Chronicles and the Early Movement for Homosexual Emancipation* (Binghamton, NY: Harrington Park Press, 2006); and David Hughes, "Profile: Wallace de Ortega Maxey," Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Religious Archives Network, September 2013, http://www.lgbtran.org/Profile.aspx?ID=362, accessed 22 November 2015. For examples of cameo Maxey appearances in homophile history, see John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940–1970*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 74, 77; Stuart Timmons, *The Trouble with Harry Hay, Founder of the Modern Gay Movement* (Boston: Alyson, 1990), 177; and C. Todd White, *Pre-Gay L.A.: A Social History of the Movement for Homosexual Rights* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 84.

[5] Martin Meeker, "Behind the Mask of Respectability: Reconsidering the Mattachine Society and Male Homophile Practice, 1950s and 1960s," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 10, no. 1 (2001): 78–116.

fiction, with such titles as *Violent Surrender*, *Beach Maverick*, and *The Third Bedroom*. The title of Maxey's book surely drew at least some contingent of pulp fans whose prurient interests were thwarted by his dry prose, but being published by Fabian also prevented it from reaching the wider audience he sought. *Man Is a Sexual Being* received very little attention and was quickly forgotten, but its location in the catalog of a disreputable pulp press serves as a reminder that, despite explicit arguments to the contrary within the movement, the sites of homophile resistance were not always confined to respectable venues.[6]

The erasure of Maxey from homophile memory has been compounded by his subsequent invisibility in queer religious history, where he again makes fleeting cameo appearances at most. The founding of the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) by the Reverend Troy Perry in 1968 looms large over modern LGBT religion, though earlier formations, such as Rev. George Hyde's Eucharistic Catholic Church, which began meeting in Atlanta in 1946, point to a larger but simply unarchived pre–World War II queer religious world.[7] Maxey's work in a number of churches bridges that yet-undocumented era and contemporary queer religion. Indeed, Heather White has recently argued persuasively for the centrality of religious institutions and beliefs to the rise of gay politics from the homophile era of the 1950s to post-Stonewall gay liberation. Yet while White uncovers extensive "hidden connections between the emerging homophile movement and behind-closed-doors developments in Christian institutions," she focuses primarily on mainline Protestantism.[8] Maxey's roving and eclectic career drifted in and out of the mainstream, and an investigation of his influence helps expand White's important intervention by charting a course that links mainline Protestantism to more esoteric faiths—the places where Maxey sought refuge for his often radical sexual

[6] On gay pulp of Maxey's era, see Drewey Wayne Gunn and Jaime Harker, eds., *1960s Gay Paperback Originals: The Misplaced Heritage* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013). For an example of homophile self-policing in the name of respectability, see Marc Stein's discussion of *Drum* and the Janus Society in *City of Sisterly and Brotherly Loves: Lesbian and Gay Philadelphia, 1945–1972* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004), esp. 226–58; Whitney Strub, "'Challenging the Anti-pleasure League': *Physique Pictorial* and the Cultivation of Gay Politics," in *Modern Print Activism in the United States*, ed. Rachel Schreiber (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013), 161–77.

[7] Heather Rachelle White, "Proclaiming Liberation: The Historical Roots of LGBT Religious Organizing, 1946–1976," *Nova Religio* 11, no. 4 (2008): 102–19. On the MCC, see Melissa Wilcox, "Of Markets and Missions: The Early History of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches," *Religion and American Culture* 11, no. 1 (2001): 83–108. On the absent queer religious archive, see Mark Jordan, *Recruiting Young Love: How Christians Talk about Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 68. Maxey briefly appears in Jordan, *Recruiting*, 71, and, not by name and misidentified as a Unitarian minister, in Wilcox, "Of Markets and Missions," 94.

[8] Heather R. White, *Reforming Sodom: Protestants and the Rise of Gay Rights* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 48.

Author: The typesetter noticed that the highlighted article in note 6 was missing a single closing quote. She inserted it after "League," but I wanted to verify that's correct? Or should the single quotes go all together?

and political values. In place of the therapeutic adoption of psychiatric discourse employed by midcentury religious liberals, Maxey's *Man Is a Sexual Being* took a more openly sex-positive stance of existentialist theology, one that resisted the dominant trend of securing heterosexual pleasures by constructing homosexuality as the repository for vestigially sin-ridden pathologies.[9] Even within progressive churches, however, he was erased from memory. While the groundbreaking 1970 resolution of the Universalist-Unitarian Association against antigay discrimination put the organization at the forefront of LGBT church activism, Maxey remains effectively absent even from queer Universalist-Unitarian history, despite the fact that he was running gay-themed programs and events at the First Universalist Church of Los Angeles by the early 1950s.[10] Arguing in print as early as 1954 that "the fearfulness of many Churches to attract homosexuals into their fold contrasts strikingly with the message of Jesus" certainly positioned him at the advance guard of the fight for a more inclusive religious world.[11]

In keeping with his times, Maxey was not publicly "out," but he was marked as what we would now call queer at various points throughout his life and career, often to his detriment, as discussed below.[12] Yet he persisted in advocating for sexual freedom, pushing the boundaries of homophile activism from within its organizational core. Maxey brought not just a

[9] On the liberal theology that cultivated a sort of "soft" heteronormativity, see Rebecca Davis, "'My Homosexuality Is Getting Worse Every Day': Norman Vincent Peale, Psychiatry, and the Liberal Protestant Response to Same-Sex Desires in Mid-Twentieth-Century America," in *American Christianities: A History of Dominance and Diversity*, ed. Catherine Brekus and W. Clark Gilpin (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 347–65; Keith Meador, "'My Own Salvation': The *Christian Century* and Psychology's Secularizing of American Protestantism," in *The Secular Revolution: Power, Interests, and Conflict in the Secularization of American Public Life*, ed. Christian Smith (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 269–309; Matthew Hedstrom, *The Rise of Liberal Religion: Book Culture and American Spirituality in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), esp. 176–80; and White, *Reforming Sodom*, 15–42.

[10] Mark Oppenheimer, "'The Inherent Worth and Dignity': Gay Unitarians and the Birth of Sexual Tolerance in Liberal Religion," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 7, no. 1 (1996): 73–101.

[11] Wallace David, "A Minister and His Conscience," *ONE*, June 1954, 14–16. Rather than a pseudonym, this was written under an abbreviation of his full name, Wallace David de Ortega Maxey.

[12] I use *queer* here as a marker of departure from heteronormative expectations of identity and behavior, rather than an identity unto itself. While Maxey spent much of his life with a male lover, there is little evidence about how he specifically articulated his identity, if he did so at all. His life coincided with great shifts in the conceptualization and nomenclature of sexuality, and while he used terms such as "gay" and "homo" to describe the social worlds he often inhabited, he was also present, for instance, at a Mattachine meeting where the term "Dorian" was proposed to describe "a male homosexual." Thus *queer* here hails Maxey into a broad history of sexual nonconformity and seems the most apt term, albeit one he might not have himself used. On "Dorian," see Mattachine Society board of directors minutes, 22 March 1954, folder 3, box 1, MSPC.

sexual radicalism to the Mattachine Society but also an existential religious philosophy informed by decades of a peripatetic, often esoteric, pursuit of truth. A restoration of his life's work to the histories of homophile activism and queer religion contributes to the ongoing recovery efforts of scholars in both fields, and it further enriches our understandings of the complex, intertwined nature of both threads of the LGBT past. Further, it helps resist the tendency toward the "canoniz[ation of] homophile sexual respectability" that Marc Stein has recently decried. Noting that the very composition of the archival bases for most homophile histories has led many scholars to "downplay the sexually transgressive elements of homophile activism and misrepresent the revolutionary aspects of the post-1969 gay liberation movement," Stein calls for a reconsideration of historical source material.[13] Wallace de Ortega Maxey's archival trail, scattered and incomplete as it remains and frequently offering only fragmentary glimpses rather than full documentation of his life and work, nonetheless undergirds precisely such a reassessment. Straining against regulatory models of respectability in both religious practice and homophile activism, Maxey's often failed efforts and very *invisibility* nonetheless help make visible the mechanisms through which LGBT historical memory is produced, resulting in a richer, fuller, and perhaps even *queerer* history of the homophile movement and its religious intersections.

A Homophile Intellectual Genealogy

The facts of Maxey's life remain somewhat shrouded in mystery. An unreliable narrator of his own biography, he sometimes offered inconsistent and perhaps deliberately misleading information, leaving a diffuse paper trail with many gaps. Still, Maxey's basic religious and intellectual developments can be reconstructed, and together they constitute a trajectory that adds new layers to the existing genealogy of homophile thought.

Some of the major intellectual underpinnings of the early homophile movement as recounted by John D'Emilio, Daniel Hurewitz, and others involve radical and Communist activism, bohemian culture in Los Angeles, and the oppressed-minority analysis that Harry Hay pioneered after observing racism against African Americans and Mexican Americans.[14] Maxey was informed by similar forces, though they were always mediated through the two dominant frameworks that shaped his life and thought: religion and existentialism. While the latter philosophy would surface later in Maxey's career, his trajectory toward radicalism and homophile activism grew directly out of his religious searching.

[13] Marc Stein, "Canonizing Homophile Sexual Respectability: Archives, History, and Memory," *Radical History Review* 120 (2014): 53–73, quoted from 53.

[14] D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*; and Daniel Hurewitz, *Bohemian Los Angeles and the Making of Modern Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

As David Hughes notes, precise, verifiable details about Maxey's birth, lineage, and even national citizenship remain elusive.[15] The most concrete statement available comes from a personal history Maxey provided for the Universalist Church in 1950 in which he claimed to be born in Los Angeles in February 1902 and to be of Scottish and Spanish descent.[16] As a young man, he entered the seminary at St. Anthony's College in Santa Barbara but was never ordained. He then left the Catholic Church and explored a number of alternative religious paths. After spending some time in Greenwich Village in the 1920s, for instance, he served as general secretary of the Temple of the People, a Theosophical group in Halcyon, California, for a brief period in the early 1930s.[17] There, he worked on establishing a college, maintained extensive global correspondence, and oversaw the *Temple Artisan*, the group's newsletter. Modern Theosophy grew out of the 1875 establishment of the Theosophical Society in New York City by Helena Blavatsky, whose enormous 1888 tome *The Secret Doctrine* attempted to synthesize all sources of knowledge, from science to mysticism. Maxey wrote extensively on the esoteric wisdom of Theosophy, tracing it through the avatar of the Master Hilarion, located by Maxey in various incarnations from Orpheus in 7000 BC through Ramses II, St. Paul, Montezuma, Hiawatha, and George Washington. He reviewed many books for the *Temple Artisan*, reflecting his voracious intellectual appetite for everything from scholarly monographs to popular introductions to Buddhism and other world religions. Building on both the Theosophical doctrines articulated by Blavatsky in the late nineteenth century and on earlier American folk wisdom about Freemasons and Rosicrucians, Maxey also found Hilarion's work at play in the American Revolution, particularly in "the beautiful and occult vision which took place at Philadelphia," which he felt best embodied the "Universal Brotherhood unhampered by creed, race, or color."[18]

Joy Dixon has observed the multiple ways Theosophical doctrines of reincarnation and the "divine hermaphrodite" of the Higher Self queered conventional gender norms and resonated with some of the sexological doctrines of Havelock Ellis and Edward Carpenter.[19] Maxey's brief

[15] Hughes, "Maxey."

[16] Maxey, Minister's Personal History Record, Universalist Church of America, 29 July 1950, box 133, Maxey File, Unitarian Universalist Association Inactive Minister Files, 1825–1999, Harvard Divinity School Archives, Cambridge, Massachusetts (hereafter Maxey File, HDS). If accurate, Maxey's account would seem to counter Sears's inclusion of him among "gay homophile activists of color" (*Behind the Mask*, 543).

[17] Gary Ward, Bertil Persson, and Alan Bain, *Independent Bishops: An International Directory* (Detroit: Apogee, 1990), 305. For context on the Temple of the People, see Paul Eli Ivey, *Radiance from Halcyon: A Utopian Experiment in Religion and Science* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).

[18] Maxey, "The Master Hilarion," *Temple Artisan*, February/March 1931, 33; Maxey, "The Founding of the American Republic and Lodge Work," *Temple Artisan*, April/May 1931, 117, 113.

[19] Joy Dixon, "Sexology and the Occult: Sexuality and Subjectivity in Theosophy's New Age," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 7, no. 3 (1997): 409–33.

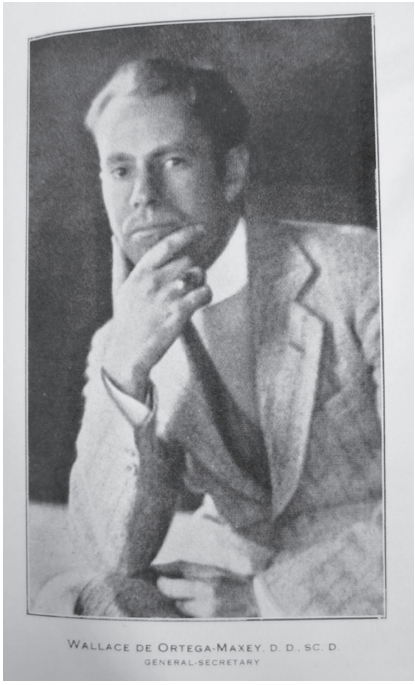

Figure 1. Maxey as Theosophist. *Temple Artisan*, April/May 1931. Reprinted with the permission of the Temple of the People.

Theosophical career hints at the refuge such beliefs may have provided for sexual outsiders. In late 1931 the Temple of the People sent Maxey on an organizational mission to Germany, where he claimed to meet and befriend Magnus Hirschfeld just before the sexologist whose pioneering work in support of gay rights was destroyed by the Nazis.[20] While he shortly thereafter ended his foray into Theosophy, the excursion into the esoteric left a lasting mark on Maxey, who returned to it two decades later in a brief 1954 pamphlet titled *Pearls of Pythagorean Philosophy*.

Maxey later claimed to have attended Yale Divinity School after his return from Germany in 1934, and he then taught at a Buddhist Temple in San Francisco for two years. If Maxey's own accounts are to be believed, he also "traveled considerably" in South America, Australia, and India during this

[20] "Temple Activities and Notices," *Temple Artisan*, September/October 1931, 62. Maxey briefly discusses Hirschfeld in *Man Is a Sexual Being*, 82. For a recent study of the sexologist, see Ralf Dose, *Magnus Hirschfeld: The Origins of the Gay Liberation Movement* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2014).

period.[21] As he embarked on these literal and spiritual journeys, Maxey also found himself animated by the growing political radicalism of the 1930s. Unlike other future early Mattachine members of the early 1950s, however, he never joined the Communist Party. Indeed, after his travels in the late 1920s took him through the Soviet Union, he apparently lectured in support of the Better America Federation, a reactionary patriotic organization that conflated unionism and Communism. The southern California radical Kate Crane-Gartz condemned him for this in an open letter, chiding: "So, young Mr. Maxey, in all your travels in search of the truth about communism you have not learned much."[22]

By the mid-1930s, however, increased class consciousness resulting from the economic depression and the newly coalitional approach of the previously dogmatic and exclusive Communist Party led to a rising tide of Popular Front–style dissent that profoundly reshaped Maxey's perspective. Working with state relief agencies as a social worker, he witnessed and supported the great 1934 San Francisco general strike.[23] At the Pacific School of Religion, Maxey wrote a master's thesis that reflected his radicalization. "The Struggle between Classes for the Division of Wealth," submitted in 1936, examined the historical development of economic inequality from the Middle Ages to Maxey's own time. Maxey's research ranged widely, though he ultimately arrived at rather rote restatements of Marx. "In any society based on private property, the relations of production mean the domination of a particular class ruling over the classes," he wrote, endorsing the intensified class struggle of the 1930s. He was so attached to his claim in the introduction that "the unequal distribution of income and wealth renders absurd all capitalist society's pretentions to democracy and equality" that he repeated it verbatim later in the thesis.[24]

Having by this point found employment in San Francisco with an Episcopal church, Maxey's newly strident politics increasingly conflicted with his role. He made a splash in the press in August 1936, decrying the staid "churchianity" that dominated mainstream religion. "Pastor Quits Jobs as Protest," read a *San Francisco Chronicle* headline, quoting Maxey's justification that "the Jesus whom they think founded their church is certainly no longer its head."[25] Declaring himself "quite radical

[21] Maxey to Clare Blauvelt, 21 July 1949, Maxey File, HDS.

[22] Kate Crane-Gartz, *Still More Letters* (Pasadena: Mary Craig Sinclair, 1930), 71. On the Better America Federation, see Edwin Layton, "The Better America Federation: A Case Study of Superpatriotism," *Pacific Historical Review* 30, no. 2 (1961): 137–47. On Crane-Gartz, see Jane Apostol, "From Salon to Soap-Box: Kate Crane Gartz, Parlor Provocateur," *Southern California Quarterly* 89, no. 4 (2008): 373–90.

[23] Maxey to Clare Blauvelt, 21 July 1949, Maxey File, HDS; "Wallace David" (Maxey), "A Minister and His Conscience," *ONE*, June 1954, 14–16.

[24] Wallace de Ortega Maxey, "The Struggle between Classes for the Division of Wealth" (master of sacred theology thesis, Pacific School of Religion, 1936), 49, iii, 44.

[25] "Bay Pastor Quits Job as Protest," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 9 August 1936.

in my Christian thinking"—though quickly qualifying, "not using the term radical in the Communistic sense"—he explained that he would dedicate himself to writing.[26]

Up to this point in his career, nothing in Maxey's public life or documentary paper trail overtly signified queerness. In fact, the only time his master's thesis directly addressed sexuality, it adopted a scolding, heteronormative tone to criticize the ancient Greeks for failing to "direct sex customs and marriage as to secure racial progress or even continuity."[27] While Maxey's Theosophical stint and affiliation with Hirschfeld hinted at his affinities, David Hughes has uncovered further glimpses of Maxey's hidden life. When officials at the Pacific School of Religion responded to a reference inquiry in the 1930s, they noted Maxey's "mental abnormality," transparently coded language at the time for perceived sexual deviation. Meanwhile, in early 1937 a cryptic newspaper report in San Francisco noted that Maxey was "accosted by two men as he left a taxi to enter his apartment," where he was left "bound and beaten"—the sort of alibi frequently offered by men either caught in sex stings or robbed by rough trade tricks.[28]

Perhaps the most publicly legible signal of queerness from this era came when his wife asked for an annulment shortly after their wedding in September 1936. According to the "former Mrs. Elizabeth Asburner Ruggles," born to a "leading Pittsburgh family and founder of several business colleges in the West," Maxey had "promised to give her all his love and affection and provide for her support, but . . . after the ceremony he was unwilling to keep the promises."[29] As the new Mrs. Maxey pointedly noted, he was "a husband in name only."[30] When the annulment failed, she filed for divorce.[31] While the limits of Maxey's paper trail preclude a more detailed recounting of the episode, it certainly signaled his failure at heteromasculinity.

Restored to bachelorhood, radicalized, and increasingly at odds with mainstream religion, Maxey struggled through months of unemployment before finding short-term work teaching in the emergency education program of the New Deal Works Progress Administration and later working as

[26] "Churchianity Hit," *Los Angeles Examiner*, 1 August 1936.

[27] Maxey, "Struggle between the Classes," 13.

[28] Hughes, "Maxey."

[29] "Church Man Sued by Wife," *Los Angeles Times*, 22 September 1936; and "Maxeys to Reside in East Bay," *San Francisco Examiner*, 9 July 1936. Fifteen years later, in his personal history for the Universalist Church, Maxey would declare himself a widower, claiming that his wife died shortly after the birth of their son, and the son died in combat serving with the French army during World War II. No other reference to this earlier relationship has been uncovered, and it is unclear whether this was a lost chapter of Maxey's life or a subterfuge to avoid including his divorce in the church document. Maxey, Minister's Personal History Record, 29 July 1950, Maxey File, HDS.

[30] "Wife Sues Pastor to Annul Bonds," *San Francisco Examiner*, 22 September 1936.

[31] "Second Suit," *Los Angeles Examiner*, 1 January 1937.

a crew member of a cruise ship in the Pacific Ocean.[32] Eventually, he was ordained as a Congregational minister and took charge of the Lawndale Community Church in South Los Angeles. Before he left San Francisco, he sent a private letter to the editor of the *Examiner*, proving the sincerity of his anti-Communist public pronouncements by informing on the "Communistic tendencies" of the California State Employees' Association and other unions, which he labeled as "infested with radicals" and run by "supervisors who are sympathetic to the Reds." His signature—"Sincerely in the cause of true Americanism"—harked back to his brief reactionary affiliation of the late 1920s but stood in jarring contrast with his apparent politics of the late 1930s, a tension nothing in Maxey's subsequent paper trail helps resolve.[33]

Settled in Los Angeles, Maxey once again drifted toward the religious margins, moving to the Ancient Christian Fellowship, where he served as president and pastor from 1944 to 1949. While the fellowship was effectively Eastern Orthodox in doctrine, Maxey described it as "composed of people of many denominations."[34] While he claimed to resist calls from the members to form an official church, Maxey showed organizational deftness when the Apostolic Episcopal Church absorbed the Ancient Christian Fellowship in 1946, making Maxey head of 2,500 communicants in the merged church for the western United States.[35] Though Maxey was consecrated as Mar David I and even featured in a *Newsweek* article, his material glories were more limited; the honorific position was unpaid, and he subsisted on the earnings of his wholesale ceramics business.[36]

Doctrinally, the Ancient Christian Fellowship overlapped significantly with the various permutations of mainstream religion with which Maxey had previously been affiliated, maintaining the independence of Congregationalism while also partaking of the unaffiliated Catholic tradition of his Episcopal stint. A short book he published in 1945, *The Divine Liturgy of the Eucharist*, offered conventional theology in Maxey's brief editorial commentary about the "celestial realms," and it mostly acted as a compendium of the Ancient Nicene Creed, vespers, and other canonical material.[37] Yet the fellowship also gestured at more esoteric beliefs that were closer to Theosophy. Calling it a "truly ecumenical, sacramental church" in the church newsletter, Maxey framed the fellowship as a home for the "numerous sects

[32] "From Pulpit to Relief Job—and He Blames Himself for It," *San Francisco Examiner*, 15 October 1936. Maxey appears on the crew list for the SS *Monterey*, bound from Auckland, New Zealand, to Honolulu in September 1937. The list is available at Ancestry.com.

[33] Maxey to "the editor," 27 April 1939, in Maxey file, *San Francisco Examiner* Clippings Morgue, San Francisco Public Library.

[34] Maxey to Clare Blauvelt, 21 July 1949, Maxey File, HDS.

[35] "Protestant Sect Merger Revealed," *Long Island Star-Journal*, 10 August 1946.

[36] "Catholicate of the West," *Newsweek*, 12 August 1946, 86.

[37] Maxey, *The Divine Liturgy of the Eucharist* (Los Angeles: Episcopal Headquarters, 1945), 5.

of metaphysics, mental-science, occultism, mysticism, philosophy, ethics" left "scattered all over the world because they could not find a place within the church."[38] The newsletter, edited by Maxey, also endorsed faith healing as an Eastern Orthodox tradition. Its content reflected little direct political engagement, with most of the stories focused on channels of apostolic succession and other insular concerns.

Did such grab-bag esoterica again hint at unrecorded queer religious histories? As an independent Old Catholic church, the fellowship shared an affinity with George Hyde's Eucharistic Catholic Church in Atlanta—and as Heather Rachelle White notes, Hyde claimed that independent Catholic churches often "welcomed homosexual priests and parishioners."[39] Located in a city with a significant gay population and headed by a radical bachelor pastor whose own reference-letter writers spread insinuating queer gossip about him, the Ancient Christian Fellowship left no concrete documentary link to gay religion yet remains tantalizingly poised on the brink of more visible community formations—which were not yet possible, given the violent antigay policing that marked midcentury Los Angeles.[40] Mark Jordan suggests that only after World War II do the archives of American religion "begin to register the scattered appearance of sexually marked congregations—not the first simply, but the first we can see."[41] Likewise, Timothy Jones notes that historians are forced by a dearth of sources to rely on merely suggestive anecdotal evidence to establish that "Anglo-Catholic parishes in particular attracted a disproportionate number of single adult lay men" in England, thereby fostering "a homosocial if not homosexual subculture."[42] Much of Maxey's life and career remains just beyond what the archive can firmly establish; it is resistant to traditional historical epistemology yet queerly suggestive and inviting of speculation even as it thwarts authoritative resolution. Perhaps an early, coded glimpse of this can be seen in the fellowship newsletter's March 1948 story about the St. James Evangelical Orthodox Church in Santa Monica. "One of the most unusual items" on

[38] Maxey, "Editorial," *Ancient Christian Fellowship Review*, January–March 1947, 3.

[39] White, "Proclaiming Liberation," 104. Maxey's *Ancient Christian Fellowship* newsletter spent a great deal of time elaborating the nature of Old Catholic history and dogma, but essentially the term developed in early 1870s Munich as a response to changes in the "New Catholicism" that developed in the wake of the Protestant Reformation. See "The Ancient Christian Fellowship," *Ancient Christian Fellowship*, January 1946, 5.

[40] On Los Angeles police tactics, see Hurewitz, *Bohemian Los Angeles*, 115–49; Whitney Strub, "The Clearly Obscene and the Queerly Obscene: Heteronormativity and Obscenity in Cold War Los Angeles," *American Quarterly* 60, no. 2 (June 2008): 373–98; Emily Hobson, "Policing Gay L.A.: Mapping Racial Divides in the Homophile Era, 1950–1967," in *The Rising Tide of Color: Race, State Violence, and Racial Movements across the Pacific*, ed. Moon-Ho Jung (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014), 188–212.

[41] Mark Jordan, *Recruiting Young Love*, 68.

[42] Timothy Jones, "The Stained Glass Closet: Celibacy and Homosexuality in the Church of England to 1955," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 20, no. 1 (2011): 132–52, quote from 135.

its calendar, Maxey's newsletter reported, was that "in the adult attendance there are more men than women."[43]

Maxey's next position would flush those queer specters into more visible form. He left the fellowship in 1949, apparently for financial reasons (having lost most of his possessions in a 1947 fire), and segued into the Universalist Church.[44] Here, he found a good fit, both ideologically and spiritually. Universalism had long been among the nation's most progressive and independent denominations since its gradual emergence in the eighteenth century. Antebellum Universalists, for instance, had frequently advocated abolition, and at the First Universalist Church, Maxey was free to return to his political passions.[45] Topics he sponsored in the early 1950s ranged from lectures by the former director of the Institute of Arab American Affairs to a program by the Asiatic American War Orphans' Foundation.[46] The ecumenical approach to religion Maxey had displayed throughout his life blossomed at the church. Early in 1952 he organized a "Rethinking Religion" conference with Jewish, Christian, Hindu, Muslim, and Buddhist participants. Later that year he delivered a speech in Hollywood for Buddha Day, declaring Universalism "in perfect accord with the teachings of Buddha."[47] As he had years earlier, Maxey excoriated the complacency of too many churchgoers, reminding them that "Jesus most certainly was not afraid of disturbing the status quo" in a blistering sermon in 1952 that drew the attention of the *Los Angeles Times*.[48] A few years later, the paper also described him as "known locally as an ardent advocate of integration."[49]

Maxey's term coincided with the first steps of a merger between Universalism and the Unitarian Church. Given the historically progressive activism of Unitarians, his agitprop approach to religion proved no obstacle in this setting. Indeed, as he noted in a 1954 letter to the president of the American Unitarian Association, there had been "concern among our own parish members . . . with regard to the extreme 'left-action' of some Unitarian churchmen," but "I do not feel this is a serious matter."

[43] "St. James Evangelical Orthodox Church, Santa Monica, Calif.," *Ancient Christian Fellowship Review*, March 1948, 1.

[44] In his letter to Clare Blauvelt of 21 July 1949, Maxey describes the fellowship as unable to support a pastor. On the fire, see Maxey's editorial, *Ancient Christian Fellowship Review*, January/March 1947, 3.

[45] David Robinson, *The Unitarians and the Universalists* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1985); and Charles Skinner, *The Larger Faith: A Short History of American Universalism* (Boston: Skinner House Books, 1993).

[46] "Arab Affairs Will Be Basis for Lectures," *Los Angeles Times*, 15 January 1951; "Japanese-American War Orphan Discussion Set," *Los Angeles Times*, 31 May 1953.

[47] "Interfaith Meeting Calls SC Students," *Los Angeles Times*, 29 March 1952; and Maxey, "Buddhism in the Western World," *New Outlook*, July 1952, 37.

[48] "Christians Scored as Too Complacent," *Los Angeles Times*, 17 March 1952.

[49] "Farewell Set by Dr. Maxey," *Los Angeles Times*, 27 March 1954. Maxey's commitment to racial integration had been reflected in the 1946 *Newsweek* profile, which pictured him alongside an unidentified "Negro church leader."

He concluded: "Let us remember there can be 'unity and diversity.'"[50] Yet by late 1953 Maxey was preemptively inquiring about Universalist vacancies in Massachusetts. By March 1954 he was delivering his final sermon at First Universalist, from John 7:46 ("no one ever spoke like this man"), before departing both the church and Los Angeles itself.[51] Even well after the fact, official church records deliberately obfuscated the reasons for his departure. As late as 1958, internal correspondence from the president of the Universalist Association to Maxey's replacement noted that "there would seem to be more to it than appears in the record" but suggested: "Perhaps some day you can fill me in personally rather than putting it on the record."[52] The reason, however, was quite clear. While the church could accommodate his leftist politics, it afforded no space to the increasingly visible gay membership and community Maxey fostered or the ideas he had gleaned from his active involvement as a central figure in the early homophile movement—work that had run concurrent to his ministering.

Minister of the Mattachine

Maxey was not among the small cohort who founded the Mattachine Foundation (soon Society) with organizer Harry Hay at the tail end of 1950, but he enters the homophile group's records early in 1953, by which point he had already collaborated with Mattachine members "for about a year of experimentation, without fanfare and publicity."[53] While allowing the Mattachine to use First Universalist Church for its constitutional conference over two weekends in April and May 1953 led to Maxey's cameo appearance in several accounts of the homophile movement, his sustained and central role in the early Mattachine remains largely unexamined.

One of the first documented records of Maxey's Mattachine involvement is a February 1953 letter to famed sex researcher Alfred Kinsey. Identifying himself as a member of a proposed advisory committee to the Mattachine Foundation, Maxey attempted to recruit the famed scholar. Offering an alibi for his own interest in "the problems of the homosexual"—something "not new" to him but gleaned through his social work, where "my initial knowledge about these people was obtained"—Maxey positioned the Mattachine (as he and other members frequently called the group in their correspondence) within the lineage of Magnus Hirschfeld's earlier research-based gay-rights work, a tradition he rightly believed Kinsey admired. With

[50] Maxey to Frederick May Eliot, 14 May 1954, file 39, box 8, Universalist Church of America, Central Fellowship Committee Records, 1919–1959, Harvard Divinity School Archives.

[51] Maxey to Esther Richardson, 30 November 1953, Maxey File, HDS; "Farewell Set by Dr. Maxey."

[52] Philip Randall Giles to Rev. Douglas Frazier, 12 March 1958, Maxey File, HDS.

[53] Maxey to Alfred Kinsey, 2 February 1953, Correspondence Files: Maxey, Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction, Indiana University, Bloomington (hereafter cited as Kinsey Correspondence Files).

a personal flourish, he added that the homophile group was "attempting to realize and put into action many of the same projects my good friend Magnus was endeavoring to do." Asking Kinsey's permission to use his name on a "letter of introduction" for the advisory council, he attached the proposed letter that described the Mattachine's work and was preemptively "signed" by Maxey, Kinsey, and Edward Sagarin (the sociologist not yet publicly known as Donald Webster Cory, author of the pioneering 1951 book *The Homosexual in America*).[54] A concerned Kinsey wrote back immediately, and not warmly. "You must not under any condition attach our name to any letter which you show to any other person," he insisted, noting that "as fact-finding scientists we do not assume advisory capacity in any group concerned with establishing policies." In a separately attached letter, Kinsey was both more friendly and more threatening. "We can be of more use to you," he explained, "if we confine ourselves strictly to a fact-finding survey and an objective reporting of our data." Lest that fail to persuade, he added: "Our attorneys will vigorously prosecute anyone who attempts to use our name." A chastened Maxey quickly apologized, assuring Kinsey that the proposed letter had not been sent to anyone else.[55]

When the Mattachine underwent transition from the Foundation to the Society in the spring of 1953, Maxey provided continuity in the face of an almost completely replaced leadership.[56] As mentioned, the Mattachine constitutional convention was held in his First Universalist Church over two weekends in April and May 1953. Maxey played an active role, delivering the opening invocation and even politely declining a nomination for the role of chairman of the organization with the argument that he preferred to remain in a formally advisory role. In this capacity, he guided the process of incorporating with the state.[57] Maxey was then one of twelve signatories to the memorandum that officially dissolved the Mattachine Foundation to make way for the reborn Society in May of that year.[58] First Universalist remained a Mattachine host for subsequent events, such as its first semiannual convention in November 1953.[59]

In keeping with Hay's secret-cell organizational principles, which were enacted as a defensive response to the punitive Lavender Scare of the 1950s,

[54] Ibid.

[55] Alfred Kinsey to Maxey, 5 February 1953 (with 6 February letter also attached); Maxey to Kinsey, 11 February 1953, both in Kinsey Correspondence Files.

[56] The shift from foundation to society coincided with new Mattachine leadership who pushed for greater public visibility among members and more assimilationist politics, among other things. See Meeker, "Behind the Mask of Respectability."

[57] Mattachine Society, Minutes of California State Constitutional Convention, 23–24 May 1953, 23, 32, file 21, box 2, Don Lucas Papers, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Historical Society, San Francisco.

[58] Mattachine Foundation memorandum, 24 May 1953, file 11, box 3, Harry Hay Papers, San Francisco Public Library.

[59] First semiannual Mattachine Society convention minutes, 14 and 15 November 1953, file 1, box 2, Lucas Papers.

early Mattachine records avoided using proper names.[60] Maxey provided one notable exception to this, however. Variously identified as Wally, Maxey, and Dr. M., he appears in the Mattachine coordinating council minutes of 27 May 1953 described as "adviser and member of the Mattachine Foundation, Inc." At that meeting, he asked the group in what capacity he should act, because "he could not identify himself too closely with the society for various reasons. He suggested that he act as a liaison between the Society and outsiders who are interested in the movement but who do not wish to identify themselves with it." The coordinating council's response was to "accept gratefully," and the minutes then specified that Maxey was not an official member of the society but would play an advisory role.[61] This role was far from passive or reactive. Maxey exercised great influence in the council, from cautiously advising it not to send a congratulatory note to newly elected mayor Norris Poulson (for fear of being deemed "partisan and concerned with political affairs" by press agents eager to smear the group) to suggesting a friendly lawyer whose name members should know. When the FBI contacted the group to ask whether it contained any Communists or knew of any gay FBI agents, one member suggested sending a copy of the Mattachine's constitution to them, but Maxey nixed the idea, calling it "unwise to approach them." Better, he said, to "wait and be prepared to give answers" if called upon.[62]

Maxey also contributed to the Mattachine research agenda of a complete homosexual bibliography. His efforts frequently went beyond advising and strayed into more of an emissary role, including traveling on behalf of the group. On a June 1953 trip to northern California, he visited Mattachine chapters across the Bay Area, in San Francisco, Oakland, and Berkeley. The latter in particular struck him favorably. As he reported back to the coordinating council, "I gave a talk on religion and I was very impressed with their attentiveness." He also "thought it might be arranged" for Dr. Evelyn Hooker, the sympathetic UCLA psychologist, to use the First Universalist for testing projects with gay men.[63]

In one more bit of ambassadorship, Maxey traveled to New York in September 1953 to meet with Donald Webster Cory (as Edward Sagarin was called in all internal Mattachine material) to discuss establishing a New York Mattachine chapter. The meeting proved frustrating; after talking for three hours and seemingly sharing enthusiasm, Cory then grew skittish the next day and attempted to avoid Maxey. He later accused Los

[60] David Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

[61] Mattachine Society coordinating council (MSCC) minutes, 27 May 1953, file 37, box 1, MSPC.

[62] Ibid.; also MSCC minutes, 5 June 1953, file 37, box 1, MSPC. On FBI harassment of the homophile movement, see Douglas Charles, *Hoover's War on Gays: Exposing the FBI's "Sex Deviates" Program* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2015).

[63] MSCC minutes, 26 June 1953, file 37, box 1, MSPC.

Angeles homophiles of "setting up a competitive book service" that would detract from his own business. Though the coalition-building effort failed (temporarily—the Mattachine Society of New York was later established in 1955, though not by Cory), it reflected Maxey's central role in homophile organizing. As part of his trip and perhaps mixing business with pleasure, he also "went to the majority of gay bars" to inquire about Cory's local standing, which he found lacking.[64]

During this crucial early era of the Mattachine, Maxey also chafed against the group's doctrine of respectability. As David Hughes notes, by 1952 Maxey "felt comfortable enough to be living in the rectory with his lover, Robert Hernandez Deanda," and even as he worked with the Mattachine, his other activities demonstrated that he was willing to challenge the society's insistence on a politics of respectability.[65] At First Universalist, Maxey cultivated a gay congregation and ran a group called the Crusaders for Universal Freedoms, which organized such public events as a lecture by ACLU representatives on vagrancy laws and "aspects related to this law concerning gay people."[66] At a time when Mattachine respectability resulted in objections to a northern California "drag show" on the grounds that "a show of this type would be detrimental to the Society," Maxey's Crusaders that same year (1953) held a "fashion show" in the church that drew hostility from church officials, presumably because it flouted gender norms, though existing documents unfortunately provide no further details. He also privately proposed expanding the Crusaders into the Bay Area in collaboration with the Mattachine, aiming specifically to include what he called "hetero-homo and Bi-people."[67]

By October 1953 Maxey privately described himself as "very disappointed" by the Mattachine's "activities or lack of them due to 'paper work' which seems of paramount importance."[68] By this point, he had other trouble brewing; church officials had taken note of his increasingly visible gay activism, especially after the tabloid *Confidential* reported on the Mattachine convention. As he related to Mattachine leader Hal Call, "the treatment" picked up after the Crusaders' fashion show, and church officials "blame poor attendance on the fact there was a drop because of the 'gay' ones attending."[69] While Maxey rarely elaborated on the size or composition of his gay congregants, he alluded to them often, as when he explained to Kinsey in 1953 that because Universalism was "not bound by 'dogma' nor 'creed,' we naturally attract many whom the orthodox

[64] MSCC minutes, 11 September 1953, file 38, box 1, MSPC.

[65] Hughes, "Maxey."

[66] Maxey to Hal Call, 7 October 1953, file 10, box 3, MSPC.

[67] MSCC minutes, 11 September 1953, file 38, box 1, MSPC; Maxey to Hal Call, 7 October 1953, file 10, box 3, MSPC.

[68] Maxey to Hal Call, 7 October 1953.

[69] Maxey to Hal Call, 26 March 1954, file 10, box 3, MSPC.

brethren look upon as misfits," including "those termed sex deviates."[70] His sermons apparently addressed related topics, if obliquely. "Hope my talk Sunday was not too 'apocryphal' to have meaning for you," he suggestively wrote to Kinsey's associate Wardell Pomeroy the next year.[71] As noted a few years later in a *Universalist Leader* article that assiduously avoided any invocation of homosexuality but that suggested that monogamy "may not be morally binding on all," the progressive bent of Universalism allowed for the acknowledgment of "variations in sexual temperament."[72] Maxey was situating himself beyond the pale.

In November he explained to Kinsey that he had "removed myself from any active participation in the Mattachine affair." Yet he kept the sexuality programming at First Universalist running, and he sent Kinsey a flyer for "Five Lectures on the Church, Sex, Religion," which were "being given in the light of the Kinsey Reports." One lecture dealt with "American pseudo-morality," and one touched on homosexuality, listing it with bisexuality and promiscuity among issues facing "the single (or in some cases married)."[73] That the discussion of homosexuality was a motivating force in Maxey's programming was suggested by another proposal, a few months later, to "give some lectures on 'The Churches and Sex Deviates.'"[74] One lecture posed the question: "How does and can the church face many of the Kinsey discoveries?" In the case of Universalism, the answer came through action: Maxey's resignation from First Universalist under the shadow of internal charges of "moral turpitude" and his relocation to Fresno, hometown of his partner.[75] Serving as Mattachine activist remained incommensurable with ministering, even in one of the nation's most progressive churches. Yet Maxey found not only Universalism but also the homophile movement confining of his radical tendencies. In central California, outside the Los Angeles limelight, he could return to fusing religion, politics, and sexuality. The results would place him in a precarious position on the social margins.

From Pulpit to Pulp

Maxey's separation from the Mattachine proved short-lived. By March 1954 the board of directors had formally awarded him an honorary membership as general advisor, essentially a resumption of his earlier work.[76] Meanwhile, he found employment as an auditor for the hotel chain

[70] Maxey to Kinsey, 11 February 1953.

[71] Maxey to Wardell Pomeroy, 29 March 1954, Kinsey Correspondence Files.

[72] Elmo Robinson, "A Universalist Pilgrimage II," *Universalist Leader*, December 1958, 281.

[73] Maxey to Alfred Kinsey, 18 November 1953, Kinsey Correspondence Files.

[74] Maxey to Hal Call, 26 March 1954.

[75] Philip Giles to Kinsey, 10 March 1955.

[76] Mattachine Society board of directors minutes, 22 March 1954.

Figure 2. Maxey in front of his Fresno church, ca. 1955. Reprinted with the permission of the Andover-Harvard Theological Library.

Travelodge—as noted in internal correspondence among Universalist officials, who continued to monitor him.[77] Yet his goal remained to lead a church, and his grassroots efforts in Fresno paid off when the new Liberal Church, established by the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), named him minister in February 1955.[78]

If the democratic nature of local fellowships, or perhaps the organizational chaos of the gradual merger that formed the UUA, prevented the higher-ups from obstructing Maxey's pastorship, nothing impeded their continued surveillance. Shortly after Maxey's appointment, Universalist superintendent Philip Giles wrote to Kinsey asking for his cooperation on "a matter of considerable delicacy" involving Maxey's activities in Los Angeles. Did Kinsey know, Giles wondered, about Maxey's participation "in a study of sexual deviation which involved to some degree a group which I believe was called the Mattachine Foundation"? It was a matter, he assured the scientist, "of considerable concern to us." Kinsey, who always protected his sources, demurred, with a deliberately unhelpful reply that simply called

[77] Dr. Gibbons to Mr. Giles, memo, 30 July 1954, Maxey File, HDS.
[78] "Liberal Church Names Pastor," *Fresno Bee*, 5 February 1955.

Maxey "one of the many thousands of persons who have cooperated with our research" and failed to provide any detail.[79]

As Maxey privately wrote Hal Call in late 1955, he continued to receive "the cold shoulder" from church officials. He was committed to ministering in Fresno. "Bob and I have bought a new House," he told Call, "in the suburbs and quite nice." When both the Mattachine and Universalist conventions overlapped in southern California that year, he attended the latter.[80] Yet some of his most pressing struggles pertained to the tensions between Unitarians and Universalists in his Liberal Church.[81] Arriving in Fresno, he had found what he described as a "struggling Unitarian Fellowship" with only a few members, but as his organizational work grew the membership, the Unitarians began dominating the Universalists.[82] By early 1957 a frustrated Maxey, having clearly expressed his belief that "Liberal Religion should not be allowed to become synonymous with Unitarianism," had become alienated from his own church.[83] He was terminated in March of that year. While he technically remained a member of the fellowship until formally resigning in 1958, this marked the end of Maxey's career with the UUA, though he attempted to organize a group called the Free Fellowship of Universal Existentialists in 1960.[84]

By that point, the minister had already shifted his focus toward more lucrative pursuits. Maxey had always retained an interest in writing and publishing. During his first stint of Mattachine organizing, he had published in the homophile magazine *ONE* as "Wallace David." A piece in 1953 hinted at the shift in homophile politics from Harry Hay's analysis of homosexuals as a distinct social minority toward the more assimilationist model of the new cohort of leaders. As Maxey urged, "At no time should members of the Minority feel that they, in their natural drives and urges, are different in any respect from other human beings. . . . [T]he persecuted and outcasts have attempted to isolate themselves from society. *This is the worst thing that could happen.*"[85]

In Fresno, Maxey attempted to get a "small publication" for fellow liberal clergy—to be called the *Liberal Voice*—off the ground. He was inspired by

[79] Philip Giles to Kinsey, 10 March 1955, Maxey File, HDS; Kinsey to Giles, 29 March 1955, Maxey File, HDS.

[80] Maxey to Hal Call, 15 November 1955, file 10, box 3, MSPC; Maxey to Ken Burns, 10 May 1955, file 2, box 3, Don Lucas Papers.

[81] Maxey to Hal Call, 15 November 1955.

[82] Maxey to Giles, 22 April 1957, Maxey File, HDS. The numerical imbalance was also reflected in national numbers, according to a 1958 report that counted 106,751 Unitarians but only 42,858 Universalists. See Skinner, *The Larger Faith*, 122.

[83] Maxey to Rev. P. R. Giles, 6 March 1957, 1446, Maxey File, HDS.

[84] Frazier to Giles, 3 March 1958, Maxey File, HDS; Free Fellowship of Universal Existentialists, flyer, 1960, file 10, box 3, MSPC.

[85] Wallace David, "Where Are You Going?," *ONE*, May 1953, 3.

Hal Call's founding of the Pan-Graphic Press, which printed the *Mattachine Review* and other homophile material in San Francisco.[86] But with his expulsion from his primary employment, Maxey needed something more profitable than a mimeographed niche newsletter. Around the time of his firing, he had met Sanford Aday, a failed novelist who had begun publishing smutty pulp fiction novels in Fresno in 1955. Maxey joined him in an interlocking set of firms: three presses, Fabian, Saber, and Vega, as well as distributional outfits called West Coast News and Mid-Tower. By 1959 corporate records reflect Maxey's role as a central participant in Aday's publishing ventures, listing him as vice president of West Coast News. Articles of incorporation from 1960 list him as president of Fabian.[87]

Typical Saber and Fabian novels ran about 150 pages and were printed on thin, cheap paper. Narratives abounded with sensational pulp tropes: in Betty Short's *The Black Night* (1956), a wife becomes a prostitute to win back her amnesiac husband, who has begun a new life as a pimp, while Eve Linkletter's *Taxi Dancers* (1958) chronicled a group of taxi dance hall girls in New York as they deal with abortions, serial killers, and aggressive customers.[88] From the start, Maxey and Aday faced obscenity charges both locally and nationally, though into the early 1960s they were able to beat the charges or hold them at bay through legal maneuvering.

It was in the midst of this newfound financial success that Maxey commenced work on his most substantive piece of writing to date. In a January 1957 letter to friend and Mattachine leader Don Lucas, he outlined a book, to be called *Man Is Sexual*, that he planned to write in response to the conservative sexual politics of sociologist Pitrim Sorokin's recent *The American Sex Revolution* (1956), which used hegemonic Cold War logic to link the "dissolution of marriage and the family" to "Soviet Russia."[89] "Naturally," Maxey explained, his book was "'extreme' in its left approach and criticism of 'psychology[,]' 'psychiatry' and 'religion.'" His plan was to "treat homosexuality as one of the many sexual deviations and in fact one of the lesser 'evils'"—an analysis he had already begun exploring in a 1954 *ONE* article titled "A Minister and His Conscience." In that piece, written as Wallace David, he had argued that "words such as perverts, sex deviates, variants, etc., apply to violation of a particular people's customs, and *are not synonymous with the term homosexual*," and he estimated that

[86] Maxey to Call, 21 January 1955, file 10, box 3, MSPC. On the Pan-Graphic Press, see Martin Meeker, *Contacts Desired: Gay and Lesbian Communications and Community, 1940s–1970s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 50–57.

[87] West Coast News Co., papers of incorporation, 20 February 1959; and Fabian Books, articles of incorporation, 4 March 1960, both in binders in box 412, Stanley Fleishman Papers, University of California, Los Angeles.

[88] Betty Short, *The Black Night* (Fresno: Fabian, 1956); and Eve Linkletter, *Taxi Dancers* (Fresno: Fabian, 1958).

[89] Pitrim Sorokin, *The American Sexual Revolution* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1956), 14.

there were "ten cases of heterosexual perversion to each homosexual case."[90] In other words, taking a cue from Kinsey, he argued that perversion was so universal as to be more norm than anomaly and thus a useless concept.

The scattered records Maxey left do not reflect whether he submitted his manuscript to more reputable presses. The Unitarian-run Beacon Press, which historian Carol Morris calls "one of the first publishers to enter the field of 'quality' paperbacks," would have been an obvious potential outlet.[91] But whether driven by rejection from such presses or the simple convenience of having his own press at hand, Maxey ultimately released his book, refocused slightly toward existentialism by modifying the title to *Man Is a Sexual Being*, with his and Aday's Fabian Books in 1958, where it shared a roster with such titles as *My Bed Has Echoes*, *Incest for René*, and *The Left Hand of Satan*. While the title fit right into this catalog, *Man Is a Sexual Being* was the only scholarly book published by the Fresno pulp houses. It represented the summation of Maxey's thought to date in ways that often went beyond the homophile consensus of the late 1950s.

Man Is a Sexual Being

Maxey began *Man Is a Sexual Being* with an epigraph from Genesis 3:7 ("the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked") and then promptly abandoned scriptural exegesis. "Theologically I consider myself a UNIVERSAL EXISTENTIALIST," he began, but the book's theology would emanate out of world-historical observations, not close textual readings. Indeed, within the first two pages of the proper text, he had eagerly run through the evolving relationship between God and man from the Enlightenment through to the modern age.[92]

Before World War I, he wrote, science had left God "pushed high in the skies" as the tight epistemological reins of empiricism undergirded the industrial revolution. In the wake of the war's human and social devastation, however, "man suddenly came to the realization that he was more important than the gadgets, factories, and products." This, in turn, led to an interwar "social revolution" in which "Jesus was re-discovered as another man" (2). Contrary to widespread intellectual consensus, however, the greatest rupture in collective human consciousness was not the Second World War but rather its aftermath, particularly the detonation of the hydrogen bomb. Maxey actually began the book with that image, suggesting of his implicitly gendered Man, "He is not sure if these particles can ever

[90] Maxey to Don Lucas, 8 January 1957, file 10, box 3, MSPC; and Wallace David, "A Minister and His Conscience," *ONE*, June 1954, 15.

[91] Carol Morris, "It Was Noontime Here," in *A Stream of Light: A Short History of American Unitarianism*, ed. Conrad Wright (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 1975), 146.

[92] Maxey, *Man Is a Sexual Being*, ii–iii. Subsequent references cited parenthetically in the text.

be put back together again. He is inclined to sympathize with Humpty Dumpty" (1). In this, Maxey stood well within the broad mainstream of American postwar thought, which viewed the world, as Paul Boyer writes, "by the bomb's early light."[93] Yet while intellectuals used the bomb as a launching pad for various analyses—Reinhold Niebuhr of social anxiety, or A. J. Muste of the need for pacifism, for instance—Maxey routed his approach, somewhat awkwardly, toward sex. Without clearly explaining how sex linked to the new consciousness of the atomic era, he simply contended that "the greatest paradox of our Western culture is that man has a greater sex-consciousness than ever in his history." Yet he also argued that sexuality simultaneously formed the greatest gap in his consciousness (4). *Man Is a Sexual Being* dedicated itself to closing that gap, primarily through existential psychoanalysis, which Maxey contrasted to contemporary psychiatry and which he criticized as overly invested in helping its patients adjust to an unjust system.

The existentialism came almost wholly from Jean-Paul Sartre, whose analytical frameworks Maxey imported into his book en masse. Though he showed frequent autodidactic strains in his often labored accounts of historical change, Maxey was less inclined to engage substantively with Sartre's complicated theorizations of Being.[94] Instead, he offered his work as something of a popularizing shorthand; invoking Sartre on "bad faith" and Heidegger on *Mitsein* at one point, Maxey simply wrote: "I prefer to be much more direct and identify this situation as 'The Great Deception'" (37). Like other midcentury queer writers from Lorraine Hansberry to John Rechy, Maxey felt less affinity for the scholastic intricacies of existentialist metaphysics than for its pragmatic implications for sexual freedom.[95]

Shorn of its philosophical window dressing, *Man Is a Sexual Being* had greater affinities with Kinsey than with the exacting ontological inquiries of Heidegger. Maxey saw sex as pretheological; "Before man could conceive of the idea of God, he was functioning sexually," he wrote (21). Early civilizations, he believed, understood this. Even the Old Testament, he noted, was saturated with sex. Only with the thought of Tertullian in the second century after Christ was Christianity "cleansed" of its Hellenistic influences, leading to a Western conceptualization of love that "is not dependent upon sexuality" (117, 18). After this, the "Scholastic God," as he called this new kind of Christianity, displaced sexuality in Western cultures. This view was

[93] Paul Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age* (New York: Pantheon, 1985).

[94] Maxey's own primary citation is to Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (presumably the 1956 edition published by the Philosophical Library, New York), though Maxey did not supply full bibliographical information.

[95] See Cheryl Higashida, "To Be(come) Young, Gay, and Black: Lorraine Hansberry's Existentialist Routes to Anticolonialism," *American Quarterly* 60, no. 4 (2008): 899–924; and John Rechy, *City of Night* (New York: Grove, 1963).

tightly intertwined with his Universal Existentialism, which, in keeping with Sartre and other midcentury thinkers, rejected the detached deity for an individualized, internal god. To Maxey, Christian theology and Enlightenment values colluded in the production of a modern man devoid of Being. Universal Existentialism, on the other hand, offered "a living protest against all forms of rationalism," especially those that "either attempt to spiritualize or intellectualize the fact man is a Sexual Being" (107).

At the core of Maxey's framework was Freedom. He declared that "the only Divinity man will ever be able to behold and know is that which is at the very center and core of himself, his Freedom. . . . Man is finally discovering that he himself is on the road to becoming God" (29). If the Christian God had meant denying the body for an abstracted spirituality that culminated in Cartesian dualism, the new existential theology relocated the soul back into the body in all its capacities, including the sexual. Maxey's scorn for Christian theology and practice was unrelenting throughout the book. Calling religion the "most binding, and restrictive, suppressing and deluding garment that we are wearing" was one of his kinder comments (17).

If Universal Existentialism provided the alternative to restrictive Christian theology, then, Kinsey played the role of its Origen, who had been banished as a heretic in the third century of the Christian era for attempting to fuse Eros back into Christianity's desiccated agape (118). Maxey outlined his Kinseyan sexual ethos in the book's crucial middle chapters, "Freedom and Sexual Problems" and "Sexual Deviation and Freedom." Here, *Man Is a Sexual Being* finally rose above its otherwise rote intellectual dilettantism to offer a more substantive contribution. To use terms that would only later obtain legibility, Maxey effectively queered heterosexuality, rendering it as "deviant" as homosexuality and thus situated on the same moral plain.

Freedom played a central role in Maxey's Universal Existentialism—again, never rigorously defined so much as simply axiomatically invoked as a foundational principle. Freedom was, however, what converted the passive Existence into engaged Being. Arguing that "from the moment man has Being he is Sexual" (64), Maxey concluded that "sex should never be treated as a taboo, much less a violation of the laws of nature" (60). Maxey wavered on this point. Though he seemed to suggest all sexual variety was natural, at other points he lapsed into etiologies for homosexuality. "Every divorce," for instance, "is a possible source for another boy or girl to seek release from their emotional scars through homosexual practices," he claimed (84). This echoed other homophile analyses of the era, which in the process of destigmatizing homosexuality often inadvertently reinscribed new models of deviance, as Henry Minton has shown.[96]

[96] Henry Minton, *Departing from Deviance: A History of Homosexual Rights and Emancipatory Science in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

In any case, Maxey sought to invert dominant discourses, turning their rhetorics against them. Christian writing, for instance, was "perverted," not sexual freedom (52). Multiple varieties of heterosexuality, he insisted, were "deviant," from birth control to premarital sex. Invoking the Cold War Lavender Scare, he noted that "the term sexual deviate has been used more recently to identify a member of society engaged in homosexual practices. This has resulted in a very careless usage of the word and is a great mistake" (73). In fact, much if not most heterosexual activity was both deviant and literally criminal, yet consensual adult homosexuality remained more verboten than unethical heterosexual practices, ranging from adultery to rape. According to Maxey, homosexuality was thus radically overrepresented in prevailing notions of deviance. A "considerable number of books" had highlighted queer sexuality "to such an extent [that] many think of this particular manner of deviation as the one most frequently occurring," but in fact *all* nonnormative behaviors were on the rise (73). He listed male homosexuality and lesbianism, but only *after* "fellatio, cunnilingus and anal-eroticism" between heterosexuals (83). Citing the Wolfenden Report, which had called for decriminalization of homosexuality in England, he found "no moral justification, ecclesiastical nor legal, for the punishment of homosexual acts by consenting adults" (84). As he noted, if the state of California began to actually enforce its sex laws, not only would heterosexuals constitute the main target, but an "economic panic" would likely destabilize the entire state (85).

While invoking Kinsey as an authority figure on the statistical distribution of sexual deviance, Maxey's primary example of a group dedicated to countering these misguided sex laws was the Mattachine Society. Though he discussed the Mattachine only briefly, he returned in the appendix to list its various services at greater length, provide its mailing address, and encourage the curious reader to get in touch. Relatively fleeting as this was, it constituted the political centerpiece of *Man Is a Sexual Being*, which was otherwise unmarked as a queer text (though more subtly, he also nodded to his time with Magnus Hirschfeld in Germany, thus situating himself within a broader, global genealogy of queer rights). Having established heterosexuals as the main sex deviants, Maxey introduced the homophile movement as the strongest countervailing force.

He also offered a positive vision of good sex, one based on "both parties" being "fully and completely desirous," which he again contrasted to actual heterosexual practice, in which husbands felt entitled to "use" their wives at will (48). "For a considerable number of persons engaged in sexual activity," he quipped, "a cadaver would serve quite as well as a living person" (66). Sexual education that emphasized consent, pleasure, and the diversity of the human sexual experience should begin at an early age in the interests of cultivating an appreciation and respect for sex. The strictures of normative gender identities should also be challenged; Maxey rejected biological

determinism, noting that "Christine and many others"—taking for granted the reader's familiarity with famous transsexual Christine Jorgensen—had "defied anatomical definitions by the simple process of an operation" (74).

Much of the book's second half consisted of a patchwork of short essays, presumably written as stand-alone pieces but strung together far from seamlessly. One chapter amounted to a book review of Pitrim Sorokin's *The American Sex Revolution*, which Maxey accused of clinging to "medieval speculative theology" (90). In contrast to Sorokin's argument that sexual degeneration threatened the nation, Maxey noted that desire and curiosity were far from being solely located with the young and vulnerable. In his own church, elderly parishioners had been "sex starved and near nervous breakdown because of their lack for sexual outlet" (95). Indeed, while the text only periodically swerved into autobiography, the author did allude to the costs of his homophile activism, noting that he had been "severely censored by the Board of Officers of my church" for working with the Mattachine (86).

Maxey was better at diagnosing social problems than solving them. When he did venture into the sexual future, the book offered somewhat facile utopian visions. His claim that the "greatest need" in regard to sex was "open discussion" rested on solid ground; his solution, that "Sexological Institutes should be opened in every city and supported by the Public Health Services," was incompatible with the *Realpolitik* of Cold War America (105). And when he envisioned that "selective artificial insemination will no doubt be the law by the year 2000," he was closer to science fiction than meaningful political intervention (even if he anticipated some of the arguments Shulamith Firestone would make just over a decade later in her feminist classic *The Dialectic of Sex*). Ultimately, not only would "sexual deviation" lose its meaning, as "all sexual activities of the future will be for purposes other than procreation" and thus literally deviate from the normative pronatalism of the Cold War era, but this utopian sexuality would end overpopulation, starvation, and even war (88–89).

Maxey was well read in a number of fields, from history to theology to philosophy. Yet his bibliography was slightly outdated by 1958, missing a number of significant contemporaries who might have enriched his analysis. Though he drew incessantly on Sartre, Maxey barely acknowledged the work of Paul Tillich, by then the leading figure in existentialist theology. Albert Ellis, the prolific sex radical whose 1954 manifesto *The American Sexual Tragedy* offered a more expansive condemnation of sex laws, went uncited altogether, despite the value it would have served in bolstering Maxey's arguments with a deeper base of examples.[97] But

[97] Albert Ellis, *The American Sexual Tragedy* (New York: Twayne, 1954). Tillich "towered over American theology" in the 1950s and 1960s, according to Gary Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Idealism, Realism, and Modernity, 1900–1950* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 436.

the most glaring omission was Herbert Marcuse, whose recent *Eros and Civilization* (1955) had provided a highly sophisticated analysis of sexual regulation, fusing Freud and Marx in a manner that Maxey surely would have admired. Though Marcuse, like Maxey, was animated by utopian impulses (which would start to fade in the 1960s), his argument for the revolutionary potential of polymorphous perversity dug deeper into the mechanics of sexual discipline and its relationship to capitalism than Maxey's blithe distinction between reproductive and pleasurable sexuality. While Maxey depicted a simple binary between repression and liberation in which religion aimed simply "to pray man into a sexless Being," Marcuse recognized the use-value of sexual steam-valves in maintaining larger systems of control (23).[98]

Maxey viewed *Man Is a Sexual Being* as something of an advance sketch, promising in the appendix to return to print shortly with a more systematic theology to be titled *The Religion of Universal Existentialism*. Yet even as a somewhat unsatisfying, occasionally slipshod manifesto, the book pushed the boundaries of the homophile respectability that Maxey had helped pioneer in the Mattachine. If the title alone was more striking than the text itself, the bold claim for sexual freedom nonetheless chafed against the homophile strictures of the era. When Maxey, at his most straightforward, wrote that, "with respect to sex, I know I am a Sexual Being," he sounded closer to the next wave of gay activists, such as Philadelphia *Drum* publisher Clark Polak, than his Mattachine peers (97).[99] And in contrast to the homophile claims of normalcy that dominated the movement after Hal Call's ascension to Mattachine leadership displaced Harry Hay's minoritarian protonationalist framework, Maxey instead argued for a universal deviance in which homosexuality was simply one variation on a theme that permeated *all* human sexuality.[100] In this, he again anticipated some of the arguments of later gay liberationists and queer theorists.

Despite its flaws, then, *Man Is a Sexual Being* offered a potentially radical homophile intervention. It might have proved a landmark text—if anyone had read it.

MAN IS AN UNREAD BEING

Because the pulp presses teetered precariously on the boundary of legality in the late 1950s, Saber and Fabian were not in the habit of sending

[98] Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: An Inquiry into Freud* (1955; New York: Vintage, 1962). On Marcuse's increasing pessimism, see Kevin Floyd, "Rethinking Reification: Marcuse, Psychoanalysis, and Gay Liberation," *Social Text* 19, no. 1 (2001): 103–28.

[99] On Polak and *Drum*, see Stein, *City of Sisterly and Brotherly Loves*, esp. 226–58.

[100] On Hay's theorizing of gay identity as an oppressed social minority, see D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, 57–74; Hurewitz, *Bohemian Los Angeles*, 231–66; and Harry Hay, *Radically Gay: Gay Liberation in the Words of Its Founder*, ed. Will Roscoe (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996).

review copies out. *Man Is a Sexual Being* was advertised in the homophile press (it "stresses the psychological fact that all men and women are sexual deviates when judged by our archaic legal codes," explained an ad in Hal Call's Pan-Graphic Press winter 1958 book list), it but gained almost no traction elsewhere.[101] The fifty-cent paperback received some kind, if rather reserved, words in a private letter from Wardell Pomeroy, longtime collaborator of the recently deceased Alfred Kinsey, but of course the Kinsey Institute could offer no public endorsement.[102]

One of the few substantive engagements with Maxey's book came through his inside connections at the *Mattachine Review*, which published a glowing review in early 1959, calling the book a "resounding rebuttal to the public keepers of the dirty secret" that man is sexual. Picking up Maxey's cues, the magazine emphasized that "many of the sexual practices of so-called normal couples are violations of law" and promised "a revelation to many who are bogged down in the shamanism of modern psychiatry."[103] Otherwise, when its existence was acknowledged at all, the book was reduced to the argument that "science has doomed God and established sexual deviation [as] a merely 'normal variation,'" as a typical newspaper article about Maxey's and Aday's legal struggles summarized.[104] Maxey claimed to have sold sixty thousand copies of the book and received large numbers of letters from readers, but no known correspondence survives. By 1961 the book had fallen out of print.[105]

Seemingly undaunted, Maxey continued elaborating his thoughts in a few subsequent articles for *ONE* and the *Mattachine Review*, now under his full name. In 1959 he celebrated the "beat-homos" of San Francisco, apparently picking up the cadences of Kerouac or Ginsberg to write, "The beat-homo has no inhibitions. Within his own consciousness he has accepted himself and is completely integrated. . . . He doesn't give one goddam what the world thinks about him." He also, perhaps implausibly, claimed Henrik Ibsen as "an early Beatnik."[106] Meanwhile, in 1960 he argued for increased sexological research as the key tool of homophile progress, returning to his book's phenomenological themes to explain that Being "is a verb form, not a noun or thing. . . . [It is] always in process of emerging or 'becoming.'"[107]

[101] *Man* ad, Pan-Graphic Press, winter 1958 book list, ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives.

[102] Wardell Pomeroy to Maxey, 8 December 1958, Kinsey Correspondence Files.

[103] W.B., "Twentieth Century Morals Challenged," *Mattachine Review*, February 1959, 32–33.

[104] Unidentified news clipping, n.d. (1960), file: Aday, box 114, Stanley Fleishman Papers, UCLA.

[105] Dorian Book Service, *1961 Catalog*, 22, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Historical Society, San Francisco. For Maxey's claims, see his *Castrametation: Living Dangerously in Freedom* (San Francisco: Pan-Graphic Press, 1963), 3.

[106] Maxey, "The Homosexual and the Beat Generation," *ONE*, July 1959, 5–6.

[107] Wallace de Ortega Maxey, "Looking Forward," *Mattachine Review*, January 1960, 18.

Elected director of research at the September 1959 Mattachine board of directors meeting, Maxey seemed well placed to advance that agenda.[108] Yet, perhaps in part due to the unsavory newspaper coverage of the various obscenity cases his presses were involved in, he lost reelection the next year.[109] Maxey remained with the Mattachine Society through its mid-1960s decline and was appointed by president Hal Call to chair a new publications committee as late as August 1963. But by that point his legal troubles had superseded his writing or activism.[110] After indictments in Fresno, Phoenix, Grand Rapids, Honolulu, Burbank, and Alameda County in the San Francisco Bay Area, Maxey and Aday finally ran out of luck in the Michigan case. Convicted on obscenity charges stemming from the Saber book *Sex Life of a Cop*, Aday and Maxey received staggering sentences, in Maxey's case fifteen years' imprisonment and a $19,000 fine. On top of this, and with a layer of bitter irony, the judge "recommended psychiatric treatment while the defendant was imprisoned."[111]

Imperiled by the draconian sentence, Maxey's intellectual work largely came to a halt. His final substantive effort was a pamphlet published by the Pan-Graphic Press in the summer of 1963, *Castrametation: Living Dangerously in Freedom*. The title came from a "military term derived from French and Latin, meaning the laying out of a camp," and he used it to figuratively describe an existentialist mode of adapting to the modern world. In many ways a thematic retread of *Man Is a Sexual Being*, *Castrametation* offered a more sustained exegesis of existential thought from Kierkegaard to Nietzsche and beyond, and it returned to themes of sexuality and freedom. The looming threat of conviction under the obscenity law cast a shadow over the entire pamphlet, from an allusion to the law on the very first page to Maxey's deeply personal claim that "the most frustrating and senseless hurdy-gurdy we have to put up with is the anti-obscenity purge initiated by the contemporary Comstocks too numerous to mention."[112] Published as the first title in a series of Mattachine Lectures in Contemporary Thought that never got off the ground, *Castrametation* was featured on the cover of the homophile *Dorian Book Quarterly* in September 1963 but otherwise once more faded into immediate obscurity.[113]

[108] Minutes of board of directors, Mattachine Society, 7 September 1959, file 32, box 1, MSPC.

[109] Board of directors minutes, Mattachine Society, 5 September 1960, file 32, box 1, MSPC.

[110] Board of directors minutes, Mattachine Society, 25 August 1963, file 32, box 1, MSPC.

[111] "Two in Obscene Book Case Given Prison Terms of 15 and 25 Years," *Los Angeles Times*, 31 December 1963. On the various other charges, see Robert Kirsch, "Obscenity—U.S. Style," *Los Angeles Times*, 12 January 1964.

[112] Maxey, *Castrametation*, 5, 50.

[113] It seems that fairly few copies of the pamphlet were printed or preserved; only two known copies remain available, at the special collections divisions of UCLA and California State University—Northridge.

Maxey and Aday ultimately managed to overturn their conviction, but only after a protracted series of appeals that stretched across four years and reached all the way up to the US Supreme Court, which reversed the charges without comment in July 1967.[114] The damage inflicted, however, transcended the technical case-law victory. All accounts of Maxey's later years are uniformly grim, noting alcoholism and a sad decline. When a researcher inquired about him to the UUA in the late 1970s, he noted that longtime homophile activist Dorr Legg at ONE "says he was an alcoholic and is probably dead by now."[115]

He was not dead—in fact, Maxey survived to ninety, passing away in 1992—but he was forgotten.[116] A 1969 letter from Maxey to his attorney listed his profession as president of the California National News Company, through which he was carrying on his publishing activities in Fresno, and a friend's later reminiscences of Maxey detail his somewhat degraded return to the ministry. He became willing to formally bestow ecclesiastical titles in exchange for alcohol—a practice that led to his suspension—for his own protection, as a memorandum put it, from a revived Ancient Christian Fellowship in 1976.[117] Having fallen into stasis, the worlds he had helped create passed him by. When a new generation of gay liberationists demanded change at the Universalist Unitarian convention of 1971, their statement on the "emergence of gay consciousness" in the UUA showed no awareness of Maxey. In fact, that same year, an internal UUA memorandum speculated that "he is presently in jail."[118] This coincided with the early research of the first wave of gay historians. In contrast to Maxey's invisibility, the more recognized and respectable homophile activists provided interviews and documents to Jonathan Ned Katz and John D'Emilio as they began their pioneering historical work, thereby helping shape a narrative that privileged their memory over that of less reputable or more marginalized figures.[119]

By the time of Maxey's death, a proliferation of scholarship on the queer past had begun a sustained historical recovery project. Yet even Harry Hay would recall Maxey to his own biographer as "a sympathetic hetero,"

[114] Aday v. United States, 388 US 447 (1967).

[115] Bill Dry to Bob, 18 September 1978, Maxey File, HDS.

[116] On Maxey's death, see Hughes, "Profile: Wallace de Ortega Maxey."

[117] Maxey to Leonard Kamaras, 11 March 1969, file: Aday, box 35, Fleishman Papers; on Maxey's decline, see Bishop Donald Pierce Weeks, "Wallace David de Ortega Maxey," http://www.cosmas.cnc.net/maxey.htm, accessed 23 November 2015. His suspension is documented in a memorandum by Weeks, San Francisco bishop of the Ancient Christian Fellowship, 18 October 1977, file: Weeks, box 1, Raymond Broshears Papers, GLBT Historical Society.

[118] Dick Nash, "Emergence of Gay Consciousness at the 1971 General Assembly," July 1971, subject file: Unitarian Universalist, ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives; Division of MCE memo, 11 January 1971, Maxey File, HDS. For more on UUA sexual politics, see Oppenheimer, "'The Inherent Worth and Dignity.'"

[119] Stein, "Canonizing Homophile Respectability," 55.

perhaps attempting to provide cover but also writing him out of gay history and memory, an oblivion where he has largely remained.[120] Robert Wood's *Christ and the Homosexual*, published two years after *Man Is a Sexual Being*, quickly superseded it in historical memory as the foundational moment in modern American queer theology—even though Wood's prose was hardly more elevated than Maxey's, saturated as it was with tropes "borrowed from pornographic literature" and written "with a pulp's relish," as Mark Jordan has recently noted.[121] Like Maxey, Wood "drew from an archive of hidden relationships and sources that could only be gleaned firsthand from someone who lived in that world on the other side of the closet door," as Heather White notes.[122] Unlike Maxey, Wood capitalized on those relationships with at least some success.

But if Maxey failed on many levels, recovering his life and work remains important, beyond the mere filling of another queer historical lacuna. His religious career points to the itinerant, roving doctrines and sites of queer religion as practiced in the years before organized LGBT religious institutions, with several hints toward undocumented (and perhaps undocumentable) queer elements or congregations. And his central role in the early homophile movement adds another layer to the intellectual and political genealogy of the Mattachine Society while further expanding our understanding of how more radically minded homophiles negotiated the parameters of the respectability framework, which remained pervasive before Stonewall. Finally, while the seemingly sad final decades of Maxey's long life hardly negated his considerable accomplishments and lengthy perseverance, his decline cannot but be read as a reminder of the psychic costs of a heteronormative society that aggressively persecuted him and so many of his contemporaries. Even in his failures, we begin to unearth new sites of resistance, from esoteric religions to pulp presses, that in turn resist a respectability that perpetually posits its own inevitability.

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[120] Timmons, *The Trouble with Harry Hay*, 177.

[121] Jordan, *Recruiting Young Love*, 74. Wood's unquestionably important book is cited as foundational in a great many sources dating back to the 1960s. For recent examples, see Robert Goss, *Queering Christ: Beyond Jesus Acted Up* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2002), 239–40; and Patrick Cheng, *From Sin to Amazing Grace: Discovering the Queer Christ* (New York: Seabury, 2012), 9. Wood himself did not appear to know Maxey's book, which he did not cite; see Robert Wood, *Christ and the Homosexual* (New York: Vantage, 1960).

[122] White, *Reforming Sodom*, 66.

was published by Columbia University Press in 2011. His second book, *Obscenity Rules: "Roth v. United States" and the Long Struggle over Sexual Expression*, was published in 2013 by the University Press of Kansas. His articles on obscenity, pornography, and sexual politics have appeared in *American Quarterly*, *Radical History Review*, *Journal of Women's History*, *Salon*, *OutHistory*, and *Temple of Schlock*, and he is currently codirector of the Queer Newark Oral History Project.