

A Religion of Clerks or I've Got Those Stuffing, Stapling Blues

August 21, 1980

Member and Statistical Records Department
Seventeenth Floor
50 East North Temple Street
Salt Lake City, UT 84150

Attention: Records Processing Division

Brothers and Sisters:

Inside you will find a bunch of membership records with addresses in the Bronx, New York. A whole bunch. Now, this shouldn't be. I've told you about it before. Go to the Bronx. There you will find Yankee Stadium. You will find the New York Botanical Garden. You will find Van Cortlandt Golf Course, Pelham Bay Park, and the Bronx Zoo. But you will not find the Manhattan First Ward. You will not find any Manhattan Ward at all. The Bronx Ward and the Manhattan First Ward are different units; different universes, practically. Do you hear me? The Bronx is uptown and to the right.

I know what's causing your confusion. The Bronx Ward *used* to be part of our ward. But it isn't anymore. Please believe me. If you could see my face, you would see that it is an honest face, one that could not lie. It is also, though, a tired face. I have seen much in my day, and most of it has been membership records from the Bronx. Week after week they roll in, like apples into the cellar bin at harvest; and week after week I roll them back to you, but always a couple fewer go out than came in, with the result that I am slowly smothering here in New York. Everywhere I turn there is someone from the Bronx. Beaumont, Bayshore, Bradford Park and Boscobel; Delafield, Dryser, Duncan, Debs: the rhythm of this list of streets has taken possession of my mind like a mantra, and they're all in the Bronx, every last one of them.

But the Bronx is not in Manhattan. It's not in our ward. We've sent you maps. We've sent you notices. We've sent you pleas and threats. It's the third or fourth time I've written. What more do you want? What more can we give? I'm a young man. I should be out tonight, on the town. I should be at a Broadway play tonight with a beautiful girl on my arm, the shriek of the city in my ears, and the double beat of summer love in my heart. That is why I came to Babylon: to live the shining and perishable dream itself. And what am I doing? I am stuffing envelopes. I am stapling. I am writing an inane letter. It's getting to me, you see.

Please, please. Send the Bronx membership records to the Bronx. A radical idea, perhaps; requiring no doubt a major reorganization of the Presiding Bishopric's Office, but is it so much to ask? We have all we can handle in the mail we're supposed to get, without people in Salt Lake sweeping everything off their desks into envelopes addressed to the Manhattan First Ward. I know I'm just one clerk in a whole religion of clerks, but your prompt attention to this matter would settle my mind and simplify my life.

Editors' Note

A friend in New York City read the following letter in a Manhattan bishop's office and, chuckling all the way to the mail box, sent it off to SUNSTONE. Equally delighted, we called the epistle's author, Randal K. Quarles, a philosophy major at Columbia and membership clerk in the Manhattan First Ward, and asked permission to print it. He modestly agreed, hastening to add that the problem described has been graciously handled by the Presiding Bishopric's Office. And so the letter, dedicated to Quarles' fellow membership clerks "in a religion of clerks."

Sincerely your brother,

Randal K. Quarles

Randal K. Quarles
Membership Clerk