

WORD FROM THE CLOISTERS

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Best of the bunch

SHE WAS "the genius of the family", according to the writer James le Fanu.

Charlotte Johnson Wahl, who died in London on Monday at the age of 79, was given a set of oil paints when was five, and took to painting immediately. With little formal training, she carved out a successful career as an artist against a frantic backdrop of motherhood, marriage difficulties and bouts of mental illness.

Charlotte's father, Sir James Fawcett, became president of the European Commission of Human Rights. Her mother Beatrice ("Bice") Fawcett was the daughter of a Lithuanian professor of paleography at Princeton. Both were converts to Catholicism. Bice met Elizabeth Longford at Oxford; she too became a Catholic, and the faith was passed to their children. The Fawcetts' five children were younger than the eight little Pakenhams but Rachel Billington – the Longfords' third daughter – says she and Charlotte "pretty much grew up together". Another of the Fawcetts' daughters, Sarah, became a nun and later assistant editor at *The Tablet* under Tom Burns.

Charlotte met Stanley Johnson at Oxford. When Boris, their first child, was baptised in New York in 1964, Charlotte asked Rachel if



she would be his godmother. There were three more children – Rachel, Jo and Leo – before they divorced in 1979. Charlotte married the American historian Nicholas Wahl in 1988; after she was widowed she returned to London. She had been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease at the age of 40, but it didn't stop her from creating her extraordinary vibrant and joy-filled paintings, steadyng herself with a walking frame as she did so.

"JOKES ARE an essential feature of modern Jewish life," the American-born rabbi and

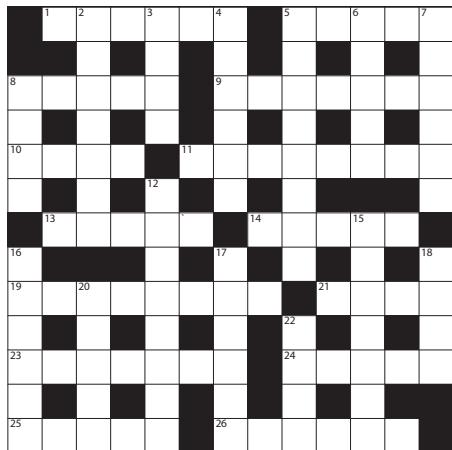
Professor Emeritus of Judaism at the University of Wales, Dan Cohn-Sherbok, tells us. "Yet I'm struck by how offensive they are."

Cohn-Sherbok gives an example: "Abe goes to see his rabbi. 'Rabbi,' he says, 'something terrible is happening. I've got to talk to you about it.' The rabbi asks, 'What's wrong?' Abe says, 'My wife is poisoning me.' The rabbi is astonished and asks, 'How can that be?' I'm telling you, I'm certain she's poisoning me, what should I do?' The rabbi says, 'Let me talk to her, Abe.' A week later, Abe goes to see the rabbi again. 'Well, I spoke to your wife,' the rabbi tells him. 'I spoke to her on the phone for three hours. You want my advice?' Abe nods. 'Take the poison.'"

"Why do we Jews do it?" wonders Cohn-Sherbok, whose many books include several textbooks on Judaism and, with his wife Lavinia, an introduction to Jewish and Christian mysticism. His latest book is *Jews and Jokes*, illustrated by his own cartoons. He thinks the answer to his question lies in history. "There has been a tradition of Jewish self-criticism from ancient times. The prophets such as Amos and Hosea continually castigated fellow Jews for their evil ways. For outsiders, mocking Jewish people is out of bounds. But for us, satirising and teasing ourselves is part of being Jewish."

PUZZLES

PRIZE CROSSWORD No. 773 Alanus



Across

- 1 Average time briefly used to measure mega-distances (6)
5 Philosopher or painter with Francis at breakfast table? (5)
8 People of Southeast Asia perhaps including the French (5)
9 Betray when no tickets left? (4,3)
10 Heard again that Narcissus ignored her (4)
11 Vestment for Mass from Croatia? (8)
13 Bit of a fool with cross inside and between (5)
14 Saint in hostile criticism for item containing wine (5)
19 Emmanuel composed as domestic held his local cheese (8)
21 Native American in mediocre environment (4)

Down

- 23 Beware of the guard? (4,3)
24 Back single church of the father of Methuselah (5)
25 Creatures involved in document certification? (5)
26 Floor covering used with Augustinian rose (6)

2 Hallows reappearance in display that is not sincere (3,4)
3 Sound of adherence to mythological river to the underworld (4)
4 Man from the east part of USA with box is wise (6)
5 Lad with apprentice in factory where St Bernadette born (4,4)
6 Bit of a fool in ballet by Prokofiev (5)

Please send your answers to: Crossword Competition 18 September, *The Tablet*, 1 King Street Cloisters, Clifton Walk, London W6 0GY. Email: thetablet@thetablet.co.uk, with Crossword in the subject field. Please include your full name, telephone number and email address, and a mailing address. Three books – on God, Miracles and Pilgrimage – from the OUP's Very Short Introduction series will go to the sender of the first correct entry drawn at random.

We are processing entries but there may be a delay in notifying winners and sending out prizes. Please keep entering.

SUDOKU | Moderate

		5				3		
7	8			1				
			9	4				
8		2	3		9	4		
	4			5	2			1
7			6					
	5		2			7		
2				8		1		

Each 3x3 box, each row and each column must contain all the numbers 1 to 9.

Solution to the 21 August puzzle

8	9	5	3	4	1	7	2	6
1	6	3	2	7	5	8	9	4
2	4	7	6	8	9	3	1	5
3	5	8	1	9	4	2	6	7
4	1	9	7	6	2	5	8	3
6	7	2	5	3	8	9	4	1
7	8	1	4	2	3	6	5	9
5	2	6	9	1	7	4	3	8
9	3	4	8	5	6	1	7	2

Solution to the 21 August crossword No. 770

- Across:** 1 Clovis; 5 Madog; 8 Hippo; 9 Hogarth; 10 Linz; 11 Alcatraz; 13 Donne; 14 Occam; 19 Inklings; 21 Olga; 23 Belmont; 24 Hagar; 25 Rosie 26 Renoir. **Down:** 2 Lepanto; 3 Viol; 4 Schulz; 5 Migrancy; 6 Durer; 7 Gehazi; 8 Holm; 12 Antipope; 15 Allegri; 16 Libber; 17 Igitor; 18 Parr; 20 Kells; 22 Khan.

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