

National Review

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The Week

-- Newt Gingrich has a flair for the dramatic, except when the stage directions read "Exit stage right."

-- Many Republicans have bought the Democratic/media line that the administration's attack on conscience rights is popular and Republicans would be fools to fight back. Polling keeps contradicting this theory. In recent days, both the New York Times and the Washington Post have run stories about how Republicans are alienating women -- and then run polls showing that women may be turning against Obama (the Post) and think religious institutions should be allowed to opt out of covering birth control (the Times). It turns out that it is perfectly possible to believe simultaneously that Rush Limbaugh should not have called Sandra Fluke a "slut" and that there is no good reason to coerce employers into providing coverage they oppose for moral or religious reasons. We believe both things; so, it seems, do most Americans.

-- Having done the right thing, Senator Lisa Murkowski (R., Alaska) quickly repented. She voted for an amendment, offered by Missouri Republican senator Roy Blunt, to allow employers to refrain from providing the insurance coverage they find objectionable. Then she told the Anchorage Daily News that she regretted her vote, because the amendment was "overbroad" and people had perceived it as hostile to contraception. If there is a pressing reason some employers should be required to cover contraception for the first time in American history -- to say nothing of abortion drugs -- Murkowski does not provide it. She did, however, take the opportunity to say that she does not agree with all the teachings of the Catholic Church or the principles of the Republican party, both institutions to which she belongs. The Daily News columnist to whom she spoke was clearly pressing her to move left in the name of "moderation," which in Murkowski's case appears to be defined in terms of an incremental surrender of freedom, pace to be determined by the polls and the media cycle.

-- Liberal Republican Olympia Snowe announced that she would not run for reelection to her Maine Senate seat. She coupled the announcement with a lament for the loss of virtues such as compromise and civility. Civility is a good thing, and compromise can be. But we cannot resist pointing out that it is easy to be civil about, and compromise on, principles that one does not have.

-- Sheriff Joe Arpaio's so-called cold-case posse has turned its attention to the deathless non-issue of Barack Obama's place of birth. Even if President Obama's constitutional qualifications to hold the office were in question -- and they are not -- it would hardly be a question to be settled by the sheriff of Maricopa County, Ariz. Sheriff Arpaio some time ago crossed the line from colorful to self-caricature, and his

publicity-seeking is unseemly. Worse, he has teamed up with conspiracy entrepreneur Jerome Corsi, who co-authored a book on the presidential birth-certificate question with one of Arpaio's investigators. The president of course long ago released his birth certificate, and the so-called long-form document from Hawaii's archives has been made available for inspection. Public officials of both parties have confirmed the authenticity of the documents, and an Arizona judge in March definitively rebutted the half-informed legal speculation holding that the president is somehow not a natural-born citizen as required by the Constitution. We very much hope that Mr. Obama is returned to his native Hawaii, or Chicago, or wherever he likes, in November, perhaps to begin the third volume of his memoirs. Sheriff Arpaio, Jerome Corsi, and the fools surrounding them are making that prospect more remote.

-- Before he died, Andrew Breitbart promised exposés of President Obama's radical past. Joel Pollak of Breitbart.com went on CNN with one such, a video of a young Obama introducing Professor Derrick Bell at a Harvard campus rally in 1991. A black law student and the lone black prof on the faculty would naturally gravitate to each other; Obama says nothing of substance; it all happened over 20 years ago. Yawn? Not quite. Bell was the leader of critical race theory, a left-wing school of thought that held that America's laws and institutions were infected with white privilege. Young Obama praised him. Not that CNN cares (Soledad O'Brien, in trying to cut Pollak up, clumsily garbled Bell's theories). Voters in 2012 will judge Obama on the record of his first term. But it is useful to understand the habits of his heart -- not the fantasies of Sheriff Arpaio, or the myths retailed by his memoirs and his claqueurs. -- Before the Michigan primary, Rick Santorum placed a "robo-call" to Democratic households, saying, "Romney supported the bailouts for his Wall Street billionaire buddies, but opposed the auto bailouts. That was a slap in the face to every Michigan worker." Santorum opposed the auto bailout too. Did he slap the faces of Michigan workers? And "Wall Street billionaire buddies" is the language of In These Times or Keith Olbermann, not of a conservative Republican. Every candidate on the campaign trail, like almost every person, engages in hyperbole. But even in the heat of battle, candidates should avoid the dishonorable and simply false. Santorum is better than that.

-- The White House recently hosted a group of left-wing activists to help them plan a prayer vigil outside the Supreme Court, which will begin hearing oral arguments on Obamacare on March 26. We can only imagine what form these invocations to the Almighty (or, effectively, to Justice Anthony Kennedy) will take, but don't you dare suggest the administration is mixing politics with religion. As the New York Times reported, "Sensitive to the idea that they were encouraging demonstrations, White House officials denied that they were trying to gin up support by encouraging rallies outside the Supreme Court." Rather, their purpose was "to give the various groups a chance to learn of the plans." Right. There is as yet no outrage from the ever-watchful religious skeptics in the media. For heaven's sake, all Rick Perry wanted was some rain.

-- Washington's media elite gathered at the Newseum for the premiere of Game Change, a film dramatization of the book by John Heilemann and Mark Halperin about John McCain's 2008 presidential campaign. The filmmakers chose a curious yet predictable focus: Although she doesn't appear in the book until four-fifths of the way through, the film is almost entirely about Sarah Palin. The movie tells us, accurately, that the McCain-Palin campaign was a disorganized, divided mess, but when it deviates from the book's reporting, it veers into caricature. (A foreign-policy

adviser shows Palin (Julianne Moore) a map and declares, "This is Germany. They were the primary antagonists during World War I and World War II. They allied with Japan to form what became known as the Axis Powers.") The actors give it their all, but the audience is left wondering what the point is of so many big-budget reenactments of recent events that we witnessed as they happened: Palin's first speech, her convention address, her debate performance, McCain's concession speech. Perhaps the answer is to be found in the elated mood among the Washington press corps that attended the screening. As 2008's winning ticket finishes up a disappointing term with uncertain reelection prospects, those mainstream-media voices no doubt need reassurance that Sarah Palin was as bad as they imagined.

-- The Koch brothers -- the libertarian philanthropists and businessmen -- are in an increasingly unpleasant dispute with the management of the **Cato Institute** about the distribution of some of the think tank's shares. The management says that the Kochs are trying to take over Cato and make it a propaganda arm of the Republican party. The Kochs say that the management is flouting the shareholder agreement, a claim to which the management's complaints about the agreement give credibility. We hope Cato emerges from this conflict with its reputation intact. While we often disagree with it about social issues, the proper role of the courts, and foreign policy, it does valuable work. It is an effective ally of the Right, even if it refuses to acknowledge the fact.

-- Representative Dennis Kucinich, the gnomish Ron Paul of the Left, has been defeated in a Democratic primary election in Ohio. We will miss him, a little, inasmuch as his high-octane blend of left-wing idealism and impenitent flakiness expresses the contemporary Democratic tendency in its purest form. With his UFO enthusiasms and his implausibly gorgeous red-headed wife towering a good foot over him, Representative Kucinich is an unmistakable figure in Washington, and a useful reminder of why those who share his views should be kept as far from the levers of power as possible.

-- Alan Grayson, Democratic ex-congressman from Florida, is running to recapture his seat. But first he ran a red light in downtown Orlando and ran into a bus. No serious damage was done, except to Grayson's car, which had to be towed, and perhaps to Grayson's persona: The fiery populist was driving a Mercedes to a \$1,000-a-head fundraiser, featuring celebrity guests Cheryl Hines and Robert F. Kennedy Jr. He has at least achieved the distinction, as one wag noted, of becoming the first politician to throw himself under a bus.

-- Before the 2008 election, Obama campaign adviser Eric Holder thrilled the left-leaning American Constitution Society with a red-meat speech equating Bush counterterrorism tactics with war crimes -- "needlessly abusive and unlawful practices" that "both violate international law and the United States Constitution." His account of Bush's alleged roughshod ride over the rights of American-citizen terrorists closely tracked the brief Holder had filed as a private lawyer on behalf of "dirty bomber" José Padilla, the al-Qaeda operative and U.S. national detained as an enemy combatant while conspiring to carry out a "second wave" of post-9/11 attacks. Back then, Holder conceded that endowing American enemy combatants with the rights of civilian defendants would compromise the nation's ability to stop terror attacks and gather precious intelligence, yet he insisted that this was a price worth paying to forestall the purportedly greater threat: unchecked presidential power over the conduct of war. Now, though, his patron has the unchecked power. So, in this

election cycle, Holder is become the champion of targeted killings of American terrorists. After all, he explains, the criminal-justice process cannot protect us, and "due process" has never meant "judicial process" in wartime. President Bush should probably not hold his breath for an apology.

-- Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner, challenged by House Budget Committee chairman Paul Ryan about the administration's reckless budgeting, explained his position thus: "We're not coming before you to say we have a definitive solution to our long-term problem. What we do know is we don't like yours." Which is to say, the most senior economic policymaker in the Obama administration does not have a plan to address the most pressing economic problem of our time -- except to thwart Paul Ryan. That being the case, it takes a good deal ofchutzpah for the president to campaign against the allegedly obstructionist House Republicans. Chutzpah he has, a plan he doesn't.

-- In startling testimony, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta asserted that Congress's war powers are irrelevant. Instead, the Obama administration claims military intervention in Syria could be justified by permission from relevant international tribunals, like the U.N. Security Council and NATO. The imprimatur of the people's representatives is unnecessary, Panetta argues, notwithstanding that the same Constitution that makes Obama commander-in-chief vests Congress with the power to declare war as well as the discretion to deprive presidential warmaking of necessary funding. The administration's position should surprise no one: Obama did not consult Congress before intervening in Libya; he consulted the U.N. and the Arab League. But Panetta's claim is badly flawed. Of course it makes political sense to draw allies into coalitions against common enemies. But their approval is irrelevant to the constitutional question of whether the president has the authority to initiate a military action. Holding otherwise implies that the United States needs permission from foreign tribunals to use force when American interests are at stake. That's a dangerous doctrine to promote for short-term political expedience.

Slaughter of the Inconvenients

The Journal of Medical Ethics recently ran an essay calling for the right to murder infants. Not fetuses. Infants.

In "After-birth Abortion: Why should the baby live?" the authors, Alberto Giubilini and Francesca Minerva, answered their own question straight off. "What we call 'after-birth abortion' (killing a newborn) should be permissible in all the cases where abortion is, including cases where the newborn is not disabled."

The authors focus on when a child is disabled, disfigured, or defective in some way. But in much the same way that the forces in favor of "traditional" abortion always keep that extra option open -- usually with the phrase "health of the mother," which includes the convenience of the mother -- the authors also believe that you should be able to kill the baby in its crib if the father skips town or if the mother just got a great job offer that makes taking care of a baby a big hassle.

Now, of course, this is a moral horror. It is also a perfect illustration of why I lean toward the pro-life position. My faith isn't sufficient to tell me that blastocysts or embryos are people. But my reasoning tells me that fetuses in the eighth month are obviously babies. It's a conundrum. But one thing I don't want is the government deciding who is a worthy human being and who isn't. That can only lead to horror.

Unmoored from dogma on these issues, you get "experts" telling us it's okay to put down a healthy baby like it was an old, sick cat.

That's what gets me to my real point, though. The authors also believe the cat -- or some other animal -- has more of an inalienable right to life than a baby does. In other words, these people are bat-guano crazy.

It shouldn't exactly stun the reader that the Journal of Medical Ethics got some angry e-mail. Around here, if I say "Friedrich Hayek was a lousy dresser," I'll get deluged with furious e-mails. Imagine if I wrote that it's okay to murder babies if you have a case of the Mondays?

But it did shock the authors of the article. "We are really sorry that many people, who do not share the background of the intended audience for this article, felt offended, outraged, or even threatened," they wrote. "The article was supposed to be read by other fellow bioethicists who were already familiar with this topic and our arguments." After all, this high-minded discussion about infanticide "has been going on for 40 years."

The authors are arrogant schmucks. But they're also right. They have been talking about this stuff for years, a point well illustrated by the "world's foremost ethicist," Peter Singer, in his decades-old essay "Killing Babies Isn't Always Wrong."

And herein lies the challenge for conservatives. When we ghettoize and withdraw from mainstream institutions, those institutions don't go away. Instead, they become intellectually inbred. What passes for reasonable discourse on college campuses and in professional journals is often absolutely crazy. But having the support of your colleagues and community builds courage and confidence. Sandra Fluke was suave in her insistence that the Catholic Church must pay for her birth control and her claim that any other position amounts to banning contraceptives. Such savoir-faire comes from knowing that everyone in your universe agrees with you.

It's like the genetic drift that caused miniature elephants to evolve on islands cut off from the normal population. Except the islands of academe don't stay cut off. We keep repopulating them with fresh minds to miniaturize, and we populate elite media with the castaways as well. And that's why the extremism of experts is brushed aside and the normalcy of conservatism is treated as extreme.

-- JONAH GOLDBERG

-- President Obama, all by himself, turned down the Keystone XL oil pipeline. Congress wants a say too. In the Senate, Republicans garnered 56 votes for the pipeline, just four short of the needed 60. They vow to keep trying, turning Democrats all the while, especially the ones nervous about reelection. Bill McKibben, a prominent environmental activist, said that the Democrats' defeat of the pipeline was "a temporary victory, and there's no guarantee that it holds for the long run." Good.

-- The House health subcommittee chaired by Republican Joe Pitts of Pennsylvania has voted to strip the Independent Payment Advisory Board (IPAB) out of Obamacare. More than a mere price-fixing board, IPAB is the central-planning agency at the heart of the Democrats' new health-care law, given far-reaching and unaccountable powers to interfere in practically every aspect of medical commerce.

There is little reason to believe that IPAB would in fact reduce the growth of health-care costs: Federal law already on the books has required reductions in Medicare spending for many years now, and Congress simply sets the statute aside every year. Given the government's inability to manage the expenses in a single health-care entitlement, it is implausible that it will do a better job managing every medical transaction that takes place from sea to shining sea. We would prefer to see Obamacare repealed in its entirety, but Representative Pitts and his bipartisan supporters have found a good place to begin the work.

-- Two bioethicists made the case for "after-birth abortion" in the *Journal of Medical Ethics*. They wrote that many of the arguments for abortion apply to newborns as well as to fetuses -- and on that point they are surely correct. Surprised by the vehemently negative reaction to their article, the authors noted that they only meant to address other bioethicists, for whom this sort of discussion is old hat. Inside the profession, they wrote, the debate over killing newborns "has been going on for 40 years." True again: That's the problem with the field.

-- For decades, conservatives such as Thomas Sowell have been pointing out a very basic fact about racial statistics: The sheer existence of a racial disparity does not prove racism; to explain a racial disparity, one needs to look at other evidence. For example, the fact that more blacks than whites are in prison could in theory mean that the criminal-justice system is racist, but surveys of crime victims indicate that blacks commit crimes more than whites. One would hope that the efforts of such writers as Sowell might have resulted in a certain reluctance to leap to conclusions. No: The *New York Times*, covering a recent Department of Education report, cited racial disparities in K-12 school discipline as proof that schools are discriminating against blacks. The possibility that black students might misbehave more is not even mentioned. The DOE's own head, Secretary Arne Duncan, is quoted claiming that the data show "that the everyday education experience for too many students of color violates the principle of equity at the heart of the American promise." About the many students whose education is disrupted by other kids' misbehavior, Duncan had nothing to say, perhaps because their plight has not yet been packaged in the language of civil rights.

-- Endless experience has shown that governments are bad at running businesses, but a story from Michigan reminds us that they are just as bad at giving things away. Detroit's corruption-plagued department of human services used part of an \$11 million grant from the 2009 federal stimulus to establish the New Beginnings Clothing Boutique, a scheme to equip job seekers with proper business attire. As often happens, the providers got much more than the intended beneficiaries: Among other things, a contractor used \$148,000 to open an account at a downtown Detroit clothing store and failed to report how the money was spent. The boutique was meant to outfit 400 low-income job seekers, but between mismanagement, overhead, and the scarcity of suitable (if you will) candidates, it ended up serving only two. On the bright side, that should be about enough to fill all the available jobs in Detroit -- and after spending all that money, those two job seekers must look absolutely stunning.

-- In 1962, George Wright murdered a New Jersey gas-station owner named Walter Patterson. The victim was a decorated World War II vet with two daughters. Wright went to prison but escaped in 1970. He then joined something calling itself the Black Liberation Army. He and four of his comrades hijacked a plane in 1972. Wright was dressed as a priest, and hid a gun in a hollowed-out Bible. The hijackers demanded

\$1 million. Wright said over the cockpit radio, "If that money is not here by 2 o'clock, I'm going to start throwing a dead body out the door every minute." The government paid. The hijackers forced the plane to Algeria. Wright took up residence in Guinea-Bissau, rechristening himself José Luís Jorge dos Santos. For the last many years, he has lived in Portugal, with his wife and two children (the same number Patterson had). U.S. authorities discovered him last September. Wright told the New York Times, "Knowing the Americans, I always feared that they had their antennas up." He need not have feared much. In a decision last month, the Portuguese refused to extradite him, citing a statute of limitations. Wright is now entertaining book and movie deals. "Justice has been done," his lawyer said. Uh-huh.

-- Jada Williams, a 13-year-old eighth-grader in Rochester, N.Y., is a bright young woman who volunteered to read Frederick Douglass's Narrative of the Life in preparation for an essay contest. She found it dismayingly difficult and felt keenly the inadequacy of her preparation for encountering a mind such as Douglass's. Like most of her fellow students, she is black, and most of the teachers in her dysfunctional public school are white; Douglass's moving passages on education -- "It would forever unfit him to be a slave" -- hit her with understandably revelatory force. Her essay was a blistering indictment of her failing school and its self-satisfied faculty, and especially of the prevailing indiscipline inside of the classrooms, which makes it difficult for students who desire to learn to do so. Naturally, the teachers set about destroying her: After her paper was circulated to the teachers and principal, she was labeled a problem student; her habitual As suddenly became Ds. When her mother asked to see the schoolwork that inspired those poor grades, teachers refused her. She was eventually driven out of the school by the hostility. The local superintendent of schools conceded limply that the situation "was definitely not handled the best way." We have some ideas about how to handle it from here, including giving that superintendent and those teachers roughly the same treatment that Mr. Covey gave Frederick Douglass. Douglass's education unfitted him for being a slave; Miss Williams's education is unfitting her to be a student in the stultifying confines of Rochester's public schools.

-- The problem with electric cars is that even when they work, they are still basically pimped-out golf carts. Unfortunately, they often do not work. Case in point: A \$102,000 Fisker Karma that Consumer Reports bought for evaluation abruptly conked out, beyond all hope of resuscitation, after half a mile, while testers were still calibrating the speedometer. Fisker, you may recall, is the company that accepted half a billion dollars of Obama's stimulus money and then set up its production facilities in Finland. And did we mention that Fisker is backed by a venture-capital firm that donates heavily to Democrats, and whose partners include Al Gore? Meanwhile, another well-connected stimulus recipient, government-owned General Motors, is having trouble selling its \$41,000 Chevy Volt. Oddly enough, the market for electric vehicles that last a bit longer than a Fisker but have the annoying habit of bursting into flame turns out to be quite limited. So GM is laying off its Volt workers for five weeks, presumably to let pent-up demand accumulate. Even if sales somehow take off, federal subsidies for the Volt will total at least \$10,000 per vehicle. At that rate, just be glad there isn't a Cadillac Volt.

-- In another distressing blow to our war in Afghanistan, an American soldier went berserk and massacred more than a dozen civilians. The heinous crime of one man shouldn't outweigh all that we've done -- at great cost -- to protect Afghans from the predatory forces that seek to sow mayhem and terror, deliberately and as a matter of course. But it is a primitive society, and the killings come hard on the heels of the

Koran burnings. In the Afghan mind, our wheels of justice will turn intolerably slowly. There will be a reflex to throw up our hands over the entire enterprise. It is still in our interest, though, that we don't leave a vacuum in Afghanistan, even as we lower our expectations for what we can accomplish. If the latest difficulties unduly hasten the Obama administration's rush to the exits, ten years of war will be for naught.

-- Bashar Assad, the president of Syria, is an assassin, a butcher of his own people and an ally of Iran. There is nothing to recommend his vile rule. He is a committed enemy of the United States who abetted the Iraqi insurgency that killed Americans. We understand the impulse of Senators McCain, Graham, and Lieberman, who want to begin the air strikes against Assad forthwith. But once the bombing begins, as Libya demonstrated, we are in it up to the neck. We cannot stop until our target is deposed, and Syria is potentially a much tougher target than Libya, which is a long coastal highway as much as a country. Syria also presents the same disturbing vista of a fractured opposition of which we know little or nothing. We should not commit ourselves to a war on its behalf or begin handing it weapons willy-nilly. Instead, the administration should be pushing Turkey to create a safe haven in the north, territory on which a rival government can be organized and recognized, and then we can make decisions about how (and if) we want to support it. The model here is the north of Iraq after the first Gulf War. It's hard to believe anything can be worse than Assad. But Sunni radicals might try their best, beginning with the cleansing of the country's substantial Christian population. The Middle East can be a little like the setting of the V. S. Naipaul novel *A Bend in the River*. "It isn't that there's no right and wrong here," a character says. "There's no right."

-- President Obama gave a stern speech to AIPAC, in which he insisted that his Iran policy was not containment but "prevention of Iran obtaining nuclear weapons." He met with Benjamin Netanyahu the next day. The Israeli newspaper *Maariv* reported that he promised Netanyahu bunker-busting bombs and refueling planes after the November election, in return for Israel's pledge not to strike Iran beforehand. That sounds like malarkey -- but it could be useful to have Iran believe it if, as Obama thinks, there is still a chance it might be induced to put its nuclear aspirations on hold. (Any Republican president this side of Ron Paul would of course extend such resources to Israel.) Is there any chance Iran can be warned off, not bombed off? Can we wait eight months, or a year? Only realities larger than electoral politics can answer those questions.

-- The finance ministers of the euro zone have approved another bailout for Greece, this one to the tune of \$170 billion. American taxpayers will be on the hook, too, through their generous support of the International Monetary Fund, which is kicking in \$37 billion. Representative Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R., Wash.) has been doing excellent work trying to minimize American involvement in bailing out insolvent and spendthrift Europeans, and she has pointed out the inconvenient fact that Greece cannot reduce its debt burden while continuing to run large annual deficits. She is correct, though one hardly expects that message to go over well with her House colleagues, who are corporately the single largest cause of government deficit spending in the world, and who if left unchecked certainly will give the Europeans a chance to return the favor.

-- The return of Vladimir Putin to the presidency of Russia is yet another unhappy milestone in that tragic nation's post-Soviet history. His essentially fraudulent victory did secure a comfortable majority, with 63 percent of the vote, without, like Mubarak's last election, resorting to outrageous levels of fraud. Russian society,

therefore, seems to have temporarily calmed. Putin's reelection will only serve to encourage two lamentable trends in Russia: the force of radical nationalism and the economy's increasing dependence on resource exports. Putin, like the nation he leads, has been fueled by an extraordinary run of good luck, and is doomed to fail eventually.

-- North Korea has long been in the grip of a single voracious family that has removed the country from the international order. Kim Jong Il, the second in this dynastic line, developed an atomic weapon to freeze himself in power. Then he invited the United States to state what it would trade for his nuclear invulnerability. The shakedown was nothing less than brilliant. The United States, China, Russia, and Japan were among the nations with an immediate fear of what North Korea might do with its weapon and therefore willing to propitiate it with whatever aid was suitable. George W. Bush evidently believed it might be possible in this way to detach North Korea from the Axis of Evil. The demand to inspect North Korea's nuclear facilities was a stumbling block. More essentially, by 2009 Kim Jong Il had received the food that would keep alive his otherwise starving population, and so he had no need of further talk. Shortly before his death, he appointed one of his sons, Kim Jong Un, to succeed him. A shiver went down spines everywhere. This new ruler had an elder brother, and was inexperienced; his pudgy lack of expression suggested that someone so obviously spoiled was likely to be heading for a fall. Unexpectedly, he agreed to resume negotiations about the amount of aid he will receive in return for disarmament. It's the same shakedown as before. North Koreans are starving to death once again, and Kim Jong Un seems to be yet another ruler who thinks Barack Obama is a softer touch even than George W. Bush.

-- The ruthlessness of Moammar Qaddafi toward his fellow citizens in the city of Benghazi helped to persuade the British last year to intervene militarily in Libya. They had been to Benghazi before. In World War II, the Seventh Armoured Division, known to the world as the Desert Rats, had liberated it from the Germans and Italians. Winston Churchill had paid tribute in his own style: "Dear Desert Rats! May your glory ever shine! May your laurels never fade!" Many of them lie buried in trim rows in a couple of British war cemeteries in Benghazi. In broad daylight, a party of Islamists went into these cemeteries and smashed with sledgehammers as many of the white headstones as they could. The video that they made of themselves at this work has been shown on Facebook. Someone uprooting a headstone can be heard observing, "This is the grave of a Christian." Another says, "Come and see the inscription on this. . . . There is Hebrew on it." Some of them carried a ladder and placed it against a large ornamental stone with a metal cross set into it. "Destroy the cross, these filthy dogs," curses a voice in the background. All have made sure that their Islamist motivation cannot be misunderstood, yet the nominal post-Qaddafi rulers of the National Transitional Council have wistfully apologized with the words, "This action is not in keeping with Islam." Nor in keeping with civilized behavior.

-- Colloquial British English contains the useful noun "jobsworth," used to denote a person in some petty official capacity who will not venture so much as a hair's breadth outside his work rules: "More than my job's worth, mate." An egregious example came to light recently at a coroner's inquest in southern England. The jobsworth here was "Fire Station Watch Manager" Tony Nicholls of Gosport, Hampshire, who responded to an emergency call on March 10 last year. A citizen had suffered an epileptic seizure while feeding the ducks at a local pond. He had fallen into the water, which was three feet deep. Alas, Mr. Nicholls and his firefighters had been trained only to Water Rescue Level One, which forbids them to enter water

more than ankle deep. They called for a team trained to Level Two, meanwhile sternly discouraging citizens and a policeman who offered to wade into the pond. The Level Two team duly arrived. After making soundings to determine the precise water depth, they retrieved the corpse of the thoroughly drowned citizen, 28 minutes after Mr. Nicholls's arrival. To express a frank opinion of Mr. Nicholls's behavior in a family magazine would be more than our job's worth.

-- The distortions created by the welfare state's culture of dependency have rarely been illustrated better than by the case of Amanda Clayton, of Lincoln Park, Mich. Last fall, Miss Clayton won a million dollars on a lottery-style game show; this spring, she was still using food stamps. Instead of being apologetic, 24-year-old Miss Clayton seemed bewildered by all the fuss: "I feel that it's okay because I have no income, and I have bills to pay. I have two houses." Makes sense, we suppose; after all, who works when they've won the lottery? As for the two houses, how come the president hasn't started a bailout program for people with multiple homes? Oh, wait, he has. Still, Miss Clayton may be in trouble; after a similar case in 2010, the state started requiring food-stamp recipients to have less than \$5,000 in assets (excluding a car). But regardless of whether she faces charges, this is what happens when government assistance is seen as something permanent, expected, even earned somehow, instead of being temporary and taken with embarrassment, if not shame.

-- Intrigued and perplexed by the talk of limited "access" to contraception, our intrepid reporter Charles C. W. Cooke went out into the streets of Manhattan to investigate -- and returned with a veritable cornucopia. Having downloaded New York City's Condom Finder iPhone app, Cooke discovered that within five miles of National Review's offices there are 309 different locations that provide free condoms and other forms of contraception. Keeping within a few blocks of the Empire State Building, he picked up samples at such diverse institutions as the Cornell University Life Development Center, Ginger's Bar, the Children's Aid Society, Uncle Charlie's bar, and even the clothing store Kenneth Cole in Grand Central Terminal. Indeed, given the heavy involvement of bars and nightclubs in the program, Cooke found that there are very few hours in the day during which one cannot acquire free contraception in New York City. Next time you hear that if the federal government does not force all health insurers to cover contraception then desperate people will have no access to it, try taking a walk in a major urban area.

-- ABC has premiered a television series with the enigmatic title GCB. The company is trying to suggest that it stands for "Good Christian Belles," but since the series is based on a book called Good Christian Bitches, its efforts have not been very effective. Not that it wanted them to be: Promoters of moderately salacious entertainments used to try to get them banned in Boston, but nowadays it's easier to find a socially conservative politician (or, failing that, a minister) to let loose a colorful complaint. Whether the politician is right to object, as Dan Quayle was with Murphy Brown, is irrelevant. Sure enough, Newt Gingrich sharply criticized the title's "anti-Christian bigotry" and pointed out, quite correctly, that no network would make a similarly named show about Muslims. Whether the mini-controversy will pay off for either side is unclear; at press time Gingrich was languishing in the polls, as was GCB in the ratings, having gotten its clock cleaned by the hoary CSI: Miami. After all that fuss, the show turns out to be your basic suburban nest of vipers, except the vipers go to church -- hardly ground-breaking. Perhaps the "B" actually stands for "Bores."

-- Ben & Jerry's, the Vermont ice-cream maker, has always fancied itself to be

terribly cool and "progressive." So it was delicious to see them caught in a political-correctness scandal. They put out a flavor called "Taste the Lin-Sanity," in honor of Jeremy Lin, the Chinese-American NBA sensation. But the flavor contained fortune cookies -- and Ben & Jerry's quickly yanked this ingredient. "We offer a heartfelt apology if anyone was offended," they said. Confucius say, Arrogant ice-cream maker get hoist on own petard.

-- One of the wonderful things about technology is the way it offers new channels for talented people to realize their potential. Where would Rush Limbaugh be if radio didn't exist? How far would William F. Buckley Jr. have gotten without television and his program Firing Line? And what would Andrew Breitbart have done without the Internet? Such things are unknowable, of course. But what is more concretely observable is that Andrew Breitbart was a brilliant pioneer of the new medium. He was there from the beginning, starting with the embryonic Drudge Report. He helped create the Huffington Post, a dubious accomplishment on some fronts (and a dubious compliment to National Review Online's blog The Corner, which was an inspiration). He went on to create what amounts to an online empire. But those were not his only contributions. Breitbart also pioneered a new era of right-wing (though perhaps not always conservative) activism and journalistic muckraking that took no prisoners. He passionately rejected the false assumptions sustaining liberalism generally and the establishment press in particular. He was authentically outraged by the way the Left used charges of racism, sexism, and other -isms to silence conservative ideas, and he was fearless in his refusal to be bullied by such tactics. Such passion could lead him to seem like he was mimicking the very tactics he decried, which was admittedly sometimes his goal. When it came to his friends and his causes, Breitbart was astoundingly generous with his time and his energy, sometimes to the point of irresponsibility, particularly in regard to his health. He left behind a wife and four young children. Andrew Breitbart, dead at 43. R.I.P.

-- James Q. Wilson (the "Q" stood for "Quinn") is most famous for elaborating, along with George Kelling, the concept of "broken windows" policing. In a 1982 article in The Atlantic, the two academics (Wilson then taught at Harvard) argued that erasing markers of public disorder -- graffiti, panhandling, broken windows -- would discourage criminals and embolden the law-abiding, leading to a drop in the rates of serious crimes. Mayor Rudy Giuliani and top cops William Bratton and Jack Maple established "broken windows" policing in New York, pulling the city out of its Taxi Driver/Son of Sam funk. Over a long career Wilson turned his busy, analytical mind to numerous other topics, from bureaucracies to black politics to the moral sense. The social sciences were stimulated by his presence, and thousands are living today thanks to his work. Dead at 80. R.I.P.

-- The dilemma facing liberal Christians in the modern era is which parts of their faith to maintain, which to jettison. The Unitarian/deist strategy was to downplay Christ. "I have . . . some doubts" as to Jesus's divinity, wrote Benjamin Franklin at the end of his life, though he added that he did not "busy" himself with them "now, when I expect soon an opportunity of knowing the truth with less trouble." Another tack is to shuck God. William Hamilton, a theologian in Rochester, N.Y., co-authored a book, Radical Theology and the Death of God, which became (in)famous when Time made it the subject of a 1966 cover story (headline: "Is God Dead?"). It was never clear whether Hamilton meant that Yahweh had succumbed or that we could no longer believe in Him; in any case, he wondered how to follow Christ's teachings in God's absence. Atheists of the Dawkins/Hitchens school punt the whole exercise. Dead now, at 87, Hamilton has, along with Franklin, the answer. R.I.P

POLITICS -- The Primary Slog

Governor Mitt Romney continues to lead in the race for the Republican nomination, but his progress is painful and slow. He fairly consistently loses evangelicals, voters who describe themselves as "very conservative," and low- and middle-income voters, while doing well among the affluent and those who describe themselves as "somewhat conservative." The state-by-state results have largely reflected how many of each group can be found in each place. He is comfortably ahead in the delegate count, and it is hard to see anyone passing him. But it is not at all clear that he can win a majority of delegates. If he wins the nomination, having Obama on the ballot against him will help him win over some of the groups that are now cool to him. But his trouble with blue-collar voters will not be so easily fixed.

Senator Rick Santorum has done remarkably well for a candidate with a disorganized and lightly funded campaign. But that disorganization is one of the reasons he is unlikely to get the nomination -- he has not even filed a full slate of delegates for the upcoming Illinois contest -- and ought to worry Republicans if he does. Santorum, if nominated, would have to build a national organization essentially from scratch.

Speaker Newt Gingrich has won only two contests, in his home state of Georgia and in neighboring South Carolina. A regional campaign would be hopeless enough; his is now a sub-regional one. His continued presence in the race almost certainly helps Romney, the candidate he most despises. He is a man of many talents and accomplishments, but the longer he stays in the race the more he risks looking pathetic.

The nomination remains very much worth having, even if the contest has caused many voters to look unfavorably on the front-runner, Romney. Democrats have sought to demoralize the Republicans by saying Obama is a lock. He does indeed have a high floor of support -- a higher one than Jimmy Carter did, for example. But his job-approval numbers are weak, and dismal on the economy and health care. His major legislative victories, the stimulus and Obamacare, remain unpopular. Most people tell pollsters they want a smaller government. Whichever candidate the Republicans finally choose, Romney or Santorum, will have plenty to work with.