NAMING TERRORISM

As you probably heard, two weeks ago, a guy
named Rodrick Dantzler went on a killing spree
here in Grand Rapids, shooting his wife and her
family, and an ex-girlfriend and her family. He
was reportedly bipolar and had a history of
violence; four women—none of them among his
victims—had gotten protection orders against
him. He might fit the profile of a "family
annihilator." But even in spite of his criminal
record, no one intervened to prevent the
murders.

He terrorized this city. But he was not a
terrorist.

I raise Dantzler not because the murders he
committed—reportedly the worst attack ever in
this city—equate with those committed in Norway,
but because of the crazy talk about terrorism in
response to the Norway attack—first, the rush to
label the attack Islamic terrorism, and now the
escalating ignorance in an effort to excuse such
bigotry (this beaut is from Erick Erickson)…

> First, those of us on the right who
> point out the now fairly common ties
> between terrorists and Islam do so
> largely because the secular left has
> become willfully naive. The fact of the
> matter is violence and Islam may not be
> very common among American muslims, but
> internationally it is extremely common
> and can fairly well be considered
> mainstream within much of Islam. Read
> Andy McCarthy if you suffer on the
> delusion that it is not mainstream.
>
> With Christians, it is rather rare to
> see a self-described Christian engage in
> heinous terrorist acts. In fact, in as
> much as there is an Arab Street filled
> with muslims more often than not
> cheering on the latest terrorist act of
> radical Islamists, you will be very hard
> pressed to find a Christian who does not

> condemn the act regardless of the faith
> of the person doing the killing.
>
> But then why is the left so gleeful that
> the Norwegian is a "conservative
> Christian" and why do they feel it so
> necessary to rub it in when they're
> downright apathetic and hostile to the
> notion of radical Islam being rather
> mainstream within Islam when terrorist
> Christianity is largely nonexistent
> except among a few crazies?
>
> Not to put too fine a point on it, but
> the Bible is quite on point about this.
>
> Secular leftists and Islamists are both
> of this world. Christians may be
> traveling through, but we are most
> definitely not of the world. In fact,
> Christ commands us to throw off our ties
> to this world. But the things of this
> world love this world and hate the
> things of God. That's why secular
> leftism can embrace both activist
> homosexuals and activist muslims when
> the latter would, when true to their
> faith, be happy to kill the former.

And frankly, the urge to dig up analysis of a rising right wing terrorist threat—particularly analysis that sees terrorism as a big process of action and reaction—in Europe is not much better.

> A report by European police agency
> Europol on security in 2010 said that
> there was no right-wing terrorism on the
> continent in that period.
>
> But it added the far right was becoming
> very professional at producing online
> propaganda of an anti-Semitic and
> xenophobic nature and was increasingly
> active in online social networking.
>
> "Although the overall threat from right-
> wing extremism appears to be on the wane

> and the numbers of right-wing extremist
> criminal offences are relatively low,
> the professionalism in their propaganda
> and organization shows that right-wing
> extremist groups have the will to
> enlarge and spread their ideology and
> still pose a threat in EU member
> states," it said.
>
> If the unrest in the Arab world,
> especially in North Africa, leads to a
> major influx of immigrants into Europe,
> "right-wing extremism and terrorism
> might gain a new lease of life by
> articulating more widespread public
> apprehension about immigration from
> Muslim countries into Europe," it added.
>
> Public manifestations of right-wing
> extremism can often provoke counter-
> activity by extreme left-wing groups.
> Such confrontations invariably result in
> physical violence.

That's not to say we should ignore the networks
of people organizing to commit violence, whether
they're Muslim, Christian, or something else
(though we're less likely to be surprised if we
don't always try to classify it according to the
ideology feeding it). It's to say that you don't
need terrorism per se to kill a lot of people.
You need a gun, or some fertilizer, or some
beauty products.

When our first reaction after a person commits
such atrocity is to try to label the ideology of
it, we seem to miss the underlying commonality
that people often respond to threats to their
own dignity with violence, and that in this
world, it's fairly easy for that violence to
turn massive.