

# Quist doesn't fit into a box marked 'religious right'

## Lutheran faith defines candidate

By Larry Witham  
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Allen Quist, the man described as the "religious right" candidate in the fall race for Minnesota governor, has a side to him that seems just the opposite. He says religion has nothing to do with civil governance.

And though he is a conservative Lutheran with theological training, he thinks Hindus in India and Buddhists in Thailand are just as ethical as Christians in Middle America.

"I think morality has nothing to do with faith," Mr. Quist, 49, said in a wide-ranging telephone interview. "Jesus added nothing to the world's understanding of ethics."

In an upset, the former two-term Minnesota state representative was given the endorsement of the state GOP over incumbent Republican Gov. Arne Carlson, whom Mr. Quist accuses of betraying Republican principles.

And now as a national media personality, Mr. Quist may be an example of the problem opponents face in applying a simple derogatory label such as "religious right."

"The philosophy he holds is exemplified by hatred, intolerance and moral superiority," said Carlson campaign spokeswoman Cindy Brucato. "He is applying a very narrow and specific kind of religion he wants injected in politics."

Mr. Quist, a bearded, professorial man, is defined by his life on a farm, his family of 10 children and his opposition to abortion, homosexual rights, "value-free" schools and high taxes.

While most "religious right" targets have been Baptists such as Pat Robertson or Presbyterians such as James Dobson, Mr. Quist is Lutheran.

"Understanding Allen Quist is to know his Scandinavian rural background and a very rich Lutheran tradition," said Ron Young, academic dean at the small Bethany Lutheran College, where Mr.

Quist taught for 17 years.

In classic Lutheran belief, church and faith aim only at salvation. Government, though mandated by God in the world, does not save souls but protects the weak and administers justice.

But Mr. Quist does not care to talk about this classic "two kingdoms" doctrine, still adhered to officially by the nation's 9.1 million Lutherans.

"Anytime he talks about religion," Mr. Young said, "he gets jumped all over as some kind of right-wing fanatic."

But the Carlson campaign likes to cite his Lutheran-published views to illustrate that they are "extremist" because they talk about government being beholden to "moral law" and "natural law."

"If we could love God and man perfectly, then our behavior would match each of the [Ten] Commandments," Mr. Quist wrote in his 1980 book on abortion.

**"Many people have bought the erroneous notion that ethics is a matter of personal choice," he said. "Ethics is a matter of universal standards."**

The Carlson campaign has underlined passages from the book to give the media. "God himself has set up government and bestowed on it the right to govern," one marked passage states.

"We believe that the Judeo-Christian ethic is the very basis of the nation's laws," Ms. Brucato said, emphasizing "Judeo" and noting that she is Catholic. But she said that ethic stands for "tolerance" in the Carlson campaign, which is flexible on abortion laws.

Mr. Quist said the finger-pointing at his religion is a way to distract from his message on taxes and public schools.

But he's willing to talk philos-



Allen Quist, a candidate in the race for Minnesota governor, answers a question about his running mate, Doug McFarland (right).  
Jeff Wheeler/Special to The Washington Times

ophy, as he does often with the Minnesota press.

"I don't believe people go primarily from religious belief to values," Mr. Quist said. "The basic framework of our values is from genetic makeup. Human beings have a basic instinct of right from wrong."

For this, he said, he relies on modern anthropologists and Harvard psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg, all of whom say human values are universal in human nature

human equality also rejects no-fault divorce and special homosexual rights, he said.

"There is a universal standard that marriage is the preferred state of sexual union," which makes condom distribution bad public policy, Mr. Quist said.

Mr. Quist said the opposition to his view about life is what scholars are calling "the ideology of choice."

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Finally, the Carlson campaign warns that Mr. Quist thinks he is morally superior. They highlight a news report in which Mr. Quist cites Mr. Kohlberg's research that only 35 percent of people use high-level moral reasoning, while 60 percent, Mr. Quist said, "don't fully understand what you're talking about."

That's saying the voters are dumb, the Carlson campaign suggests.

And yet polling often shows the public using unclear thinking. Overwhelming majorities repeatedly support the separation of church and state, but also want prayer in school. They back the right to choose abortion, but oppose abortion when they hear that 1.5 million abortions are performed each year.

"Philosophically," Mr. Quist concludes, "I'm right in the middle of the Republican Party."

regardless of culture. Protestant tradition calls this instinct "general revelation," and Roman Catholicism speaks of it as "natural law."

Other public figures, such as Clarence Thomas, when he was a Supreme Court nominee, have gotten in trouble for believing in natural law.

Justice Thomas had written that natural law freed the slaves because blacks have an innate equality given by a higher law. Liberal Democrats grilled him on whether this meant he believed abortion was killing.

That's exactly what Mr. Quist believes, and the universal ethic of