

# History Buff Sets a Course For the Right

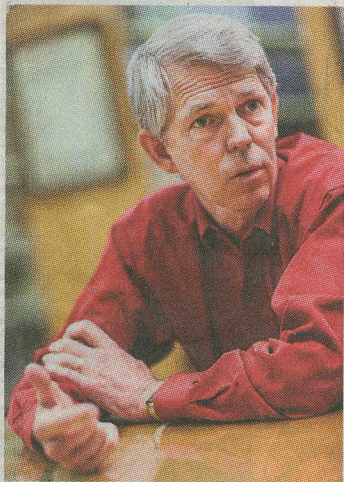
By ERIK ECKHOLM

ALEDO, Tex. — In an unmarked office building in this ranching town, among thousands of Revolution-era documents and two muskets with bayonets, David Barton might seem like a quirky history buff. But the true ambition of this slender man in cowboy boots is to use America's past to remake its future, and he has the ear of several would-be presidents.

Mr. Barton is a self-taught historian who is described by several conservative presidential aspirants as a valued adviser and a source of historical and biblical justification for their policies. He is so popular that evangelical pastors travel across states to hear his rapid-fire presentations on how the United States was founded as a Christian nation and is on the road to ruin, thanks to secularists and the Supreme Court, or on the lost political power of the clergy.

Through two decades of prolific, if disputed, research and some 400 speeches a year on what he calls the forgotten Christian roots of America, Mr. Barton, 57, a former school principal and an ordained minister, has steadily built a reputation as a guiding spirit of the religious right. Keep-

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MICHAEL MULVEY FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

David Barton of Aledo, Tex.