Episode 1,250: In Defense of Andrew Jackson?

Guest: Brad Birzer

WOODS: All right, *In Defense of Andrew Jackson*, extremely provocative title. No subtitle. Very rare these days for a book. But that title really says it all, doesn't it? So you and I are definitely going to disagree here, because although I can agree with Jackson on some things and I do like his philosophy of equal rights, by which he means everyone has the equal right not to get anything from the government — I'm all in favor of that. But I think there are big problems with Andrew Jackson. And as usual, I would say that the problems are mostly problems that his critics aren't talking about. His critics, I already know what they're going to say. They leave out — it's like Kavanaugh, Brett Kavanaugh. There are serious concerns about Kavanaugh, particularly surrounding the Fourth Amendment, but none of the so-called concerns being raised against him are even remotely relevant to anything, if you ask me. But anyway, first of all, what's the origin of this project? Why out of the blue do you decide that you've got to go out and defend a U.S. president?

BIRZER: Yeah, thanks, Tom. So I'm not sure we actually will disagree all that much. The book is never a full-throated defense. There's certainly things with Jackson that I think we could criticize. In so many parts, so many ways, what I was trained to do was simply put him back into context. So the title wasn't mine; it came from Harry Crocker. And I think from a marketing standpoint, he was absolutely right to choose that title. I wanted something that was probably more staid and academic. I was actually thinking originally, *Andrew Jackson, First American President*, even though he's number seven, thinking about, here's a guy who comes from the frontier, he's not coming out of the New England or the Virginia experience. So that was kind of the way I was thinking about it.

But I think there are some things, when we look at him, they're just non-defendable. There are things that are just beyond the pale. And yet, there are also really good things, and I think so many critics, especially if you look online — and I know you're so familiar with this, Tom. And you might be surprised to hear this, but I consider this my Tom Woods book in all kinds of ways [laughing], even if we might disagree on some of the matter in it. I've just been shocked — and maybe it's because I've been blind or haven't been watching. I've just been shocked at how many people have piled on Jackson in the sense that they've made him the ultimate boogeyman for everything wrong in the 19th century, the early 19th century. And so much of that, he went from being this kind of frontier hero to being this demon figure. And so that's why I wanted to defend him, at least to a certain extent.

So the origin of the project, Tom, really came from last April. So April of 2017, Crocker called John Miller — they're good friends, John Miller, who runs our Dow journalism program here at Hillsdale — and asked if he knew anyone who was capable or interested in writing something

on Andrew Jackson. And I immediately said yes, and we had a contract signed by about May 1st. And I know you were a part of all this, Tom, because I was asking for your advice at the time. So this was May 1st of 2017, and then I actually finished the book — it's the fastest thing I've ever written. I finished it on August 4th, so just four months later.

WOODS: There's a typical Regnery Publishing deadline for you, by the way.

BIRZER: That's what you would told me. And of course, I had never published with them, so this was brand new to me.

WOODS: So you did it, though, and here we are looking at it.

BIRZER: [laughing] Yeah, I did it.

WOODS: Here we are looking at it right now. So why don't we start — let's start early in Jackson's history. I think a lot of people know the highlights of his presidential years, but his background and — you know, he was rough around the edges. If he were at your faculty meeting, things would be uncomfortable. Maybe not *your* faculty meeting, but most faculty meetings.

BIRZER: I'm sorry, Tom, that's one of the best comments I've heard in a long time.

WOODS: [laughing] Yeah. No, no, he would stand out like a sore thumb.

BIRZER: What would Larry Arnn and Andrew Jackson do? I don't know. That's really good [laughing].

WOODS: Yeah, I don't know. Well, we'll never know. But give us a little bit of his background and also what in his background might be controversial to a modern reader.

BIRZER: Yeah, you know, so much of what he was would be controversial to almost any modern reader, but especially in these polarized times. And I know you deal with this all the time, Tom, so I'm really a piker when it comes to this stuff, just kind of getting my feet wet for the first time in something really controversial. But Jackson comes out of this Scotch-Irish family. So the family had immigrated to America in 1765. He was born in March of 1767, the last child of his family, and his mom and dad were very typical Scotch-Irish, had come originally from Scotland to Ireland, and ended up in North America. Nominally Presbyterian, the mom was far more so than the dad, not atypically.

But Scotch-Irish culture here, as people like Grady McWhiney and Forrest McDonald have argued, was just unbelievably violent, all centered around the violence of the man and the dignity of the woman. And you really do see that throughout all of Andrew Jackson's life. So he actually fought — and we know he fired a few shots — during the American Revolution. And he and his brother were captured by Brits, and one of the British soldiers that had captured him took the hilt of his sword and beat Andrew Jackson's skull. And it's something — Jackson was about 13 at the time, and he never, ever got over that. It really affected him. Whether it affected him intellectually or not, I'm not sure, but it definitely affected him in his outlook of the world. And he never really had any respect for authority at that point. Really, his own authority became himself. And he's an old-fashioned patriarch in the kind of Roman sense.

But his mom dies from disease from nursing soldiers during the war. She's a great Revolutionary hero. He loses his brother. His dad has passed away. So by the end of the American Revolution, Jackson's 13 and he's entirely on his own. No family, no money, nothing. So he really does have to make his way. Starts from absolutely zero and makes his way up, mostly by investing in land, but of course, he also, being a typical Southwestern man, was also a slave owner, and he made a big deal of being able to buy his first slave and showing office for slave in Nashville. And it kind of went from there.

WOODS: All right, let's talk about — let's move on, because we do have to ultimately get to the presidency. So let's say something about him as a frontiersman and his views of the Indians and interaction with them, questions like that that are of presentation interest.

BIRZER: Yeah, thanks, Tom. And I'll try and be somewhat short on this and not go into a monologue. So Andrew Jackson is absolutely a man of the frontier, and I think, looking at the scholarship that's been done on him, that's been forgotten. There were a lot of American studies people who kind of looked at that, but I don't think did a great job in the 1950s. But most people take him as a Southerner, because he was a slave owner. And I think there are Southern elements to him, but he really does strike me as a very frontier figure, not only in the way that he approaches life, but in the way he approaches his enemies too. We often think of him as an Indian hater. He wasn't an Indian hater. He had great respect for the American Indians in all kinds of ways. That doesn't mean his policies were always commensurate with that respect. But certainly, as a young man, when he was fighting the Indians — and he was an Indian fighter. There's no doubt about that. He could be very brutal. But he did have a certain kind of just war ethic, where he refused to attack Indian women or children. In fact, he quite often protected them. And he really did see battle as something that only males — that is, those who are choosing to be in battle — should be a part of. So he carries that with him his whole life.

But the idea that he hates Indians, I think, is way too much. There are certain Indians he dislikes. There are others he cherishes. He fights with Indians throughout all of his militia career. He always has Indians on his side. He's always able to recruit numbers of Indians, especially Creeks, who will fight with him. So to say that he's an ethnic cleanser in favor genocide of the Indians is just taking it way too far.

WOODS: All right, we'll come back to that topic a little bit later. I want to ask you, given that I want to focus primarily on his years as president, how would you describe his philosophy, his political philosophy?

BIRZER: You know, fascinating to me, because we often think of him as the beginning of the Democratic Party — and Dinesh D'Souza has that book out, just trashing Jackson, his most recent book. And you see that on both the left and the right, where people are arguing that. What I found, Tom, in my own research, and I was somewhat surprised by this and somewhat not, but Jackson never once in anything that I could find did he ever refer to himself as a capital D Democrat. He always used republican language, and he always referred to himself as a small R republican. And I think unless we understand that, we're going to miss Jackson. He is a unionist. He starts out, when he's in politics, he's a very close friend with Nathaniel Macon. He's a good friend with — at least an ally with John Taylor of Caroline. And he's an extremely close friend with John Randolph of Roanoke. So he identifies when he's in the legislature with the Old Republicans, with the best — in my mind, the great libertarians of that day.

But he also has this streak in him that is a little bit more unionists than they are. And when it comes to the Nullification Crisis in 1832, he definitely uses the full force of the executive to stop that. So it's somewhat rare in terms of his politics that he did that. I don't think it's out of his character, if that makes sense, that he did it, that he stopped Calhoun and he stopped South Carolina from nullifying anything.

WOODS: I think there are a couple of themes in his thought that are at work at once. On the one hand, I think by and large, he has small government instincts. I don't think he believes in, you know, he wouldn't support — in fact, you know, what's interesting, Brad? On my general exam — which we had to take I think if you're doing honors in college. You had to take a written exam, a special written exam before the end of the year.

BIRZER: Sure.

WOODS: And one of the quiz essay questions that was on there was an argument about Arthur Schlesinger, who had argued that you could trace out an ideological line or a political line from Andrew Jackson to the New Deal. And did we agree with that? And I said absolutely not, and I just gave piece of evidence after evidence after evidence. And I ended up knowing the person who wound up grading mine, and he said: we all agreed you gave the best answer of anyone. And I gave the: absolutely Andrew Jackson has nothing in common whatsoever with the New Deal answer. So I was very happy about that. So that's one thing. So there's definitely that.

But on the other hand, there very much is the unionist, the — yes, he recognizes the states, but he's very much of the: when there's a jurisdiction, it's going to be abided by and listen to. So if you live in the physical territory of a state, then you're bound by the laws of that state, even if you're an Indian tribe. You're going to have to, one way or another, reconcile yourself to the fact that that's the jurisdiction you live in. And so likewise, that same kind of thinking leads into the Nullification Crisis. *Look, yeah, you're a state, but fundamentally, you're part of the United States. And that means there's one set of commands that you've got to obey.*

And he's also got this idea that he is the unique representative of the American people, because unlike a senator or representative, who are elected by just certain chunks of the people, he's elected by the whole people, and that gives him a certain —

BIRZER: Cachet.

WOODS: Yeah. And it puts him in a position where he can say that he has a mandate that nobody else has. And I think that's part of the concern that the extremely unfashionable Calhoun has, which his view is: there is no such thing as the American people. What we have are the people of Massachusetts, the people of South Carolina, the people of Virginia. We don't have *an* American people, and so for this guy to be posturing as *the* spokesman of the American people is not promising.

BIRZER: I agree, Tom, and in the book, I did try pretty hard to give Calhoun's point of view as neutrally as I could. And I actually don't like Calhoun as a person. I think he was pretty mischievous, and I think he had a Machiavellian streak. But I would never disagree with his thought. I mean, he was a brilliant, absolutely brilliant man. Jackson was not a brilliant man. Jackson was a doer. He was not a thinker in that way.

And I also agree with you. I think it's very problematic that Andrew Jackson asserted that he was the representative of the American people. That's a very, very dangerous precedent to create. And you and I have talked about this before, Tom, and I've made all kinds of arguments prior to this. I think the presidency is the single most failed institution of the Constitution. I think we've only had a few presidents who were even worthy of being presidents. I don't think it's a great institution, and I don't think it's good for the republic overall. I think it's very, very dangerous.

But what I think found, at least — and taking all that for granted and putting that in the background, I do also think that Jackson was much more like John Marshall in the Supreme Court in *Marbury vs. Madison*, where Marshall is really asserting equality of the Supreme Court rather than supremacy. I feel that Jackson, in his own kind of clumsy way, was attempting to assert equality of the presidency rather than superiority, but because of his personality, I think it came across many times as superiority.

WOODS: That's actually a very good point, because his view seems to have been that of Jefferson, that the three branches have a kind of concurrent review, and they each have responsibility to uphold the Constitution. So even if the court tells him, for example, that the National Bank is constitutionally okay, that doesn't mean that he can't still veto it on constitutional grounds, because he thinks they're wrong and I also have to protect the Constitution. Why don't we jump to the topic, though, that everybody's waiting for?

BIRZER: Sure.

WOODS: And you know what that is. It's it has to do with Indian removal. Now, of course, the Trail of Tears takes place under Martin Van Buren, but that doesn't altogether exonerate Jackson. What exactly happened here with the so-called Indian Removal Act?

BIRZER: Yeah, Tom, there's no justification for at least trying to explain its effects. It was a disaster. It was a hideous, heinous disaster. So we know Andrew Jackson had this vision. And he wasn't the only one. Quincy Adams had had it, as well, James Monroe. There had been a lot of debate about what should be done with the American Indian. How do we keep the Indian without destroying the Indian? How do we civilize the Indian without destroying the Indian? And this was the great Indian problem. And you had certain people who did want to destroy the Indian; there's no question about that. But they were in the minority.

And so Andrew Jackson, like many of his predecessors, felt that the best way to protect the Indian was to put them on the other side of the 98ty Meridian, to put the northern tribes in Kansas and the southern tribes in Oklahoma. And the thought was that if we can get them out of the way of whites who are harassing them, we can allow them to civilize — that is, they can be out there and they can kind anthropologically, culturally develop from one stage to another.

Now, whatever the justification was, the moment, for example, that Andrew Jackson ordered the removal of the Choctaw Indians out of Mississippi, Georgia, and Alabama, from that moment and over the next year, the Choctaw went from roughly 18,000 members to just about 6,000 members. So they lost almost two out of every three of their tribe. That's unacceptable. There's just no question about that. And so Jackson, whatever his intent, there's no doubt that the execution was brutal.

Now, having said that, I do think that we have to be careful when people — and I've seen this everywhere — say that Andrew Jackson was an ethnic cleanser, of course, taking that from what was going on in former Yugoslavia in the early part of the 1990s. That seems way too strong to me. I think Jackson made a mistake. I think a lot of lives were lost because of that mistake. I think it was the wrong decision. I think John Marshall had it right when he was trying to declare the Indians as essentially property holders, but collectively. At least that's one possibility that we could look at. I think Jackson was wrong.

But at the same time, the evidence that Jackson was trying to kill the Indians, just, it's not there. It's just not there. So I think he bends over backwards to try and save them. And it's worth remembering, Tom, that at the time, Jackson's views were such that he was seen as somewhere between a moderate on the Indian problem and an Indian lover. And the reason he was accused of being an Indian lover is because he was willing to spend huge amounts of the federal budget on removal. And there were a lot of people who are angry about that. This was tax money taken from white people; it should go back to white people; it should not be used for the Indians.

And there were a lot of complaints as well that Jackson was removing the Indians to some of the nicest land in North America. And to this day, we know that eastern part of Oklahoma in particular is unbelievably fertile. It's a gorgeous piece of property. It's beautiful, and the Choctaw, the Creek, the Cherokee, the Chickasaw all have thriving cultures there. So if Jackson really did mean to kill them all, he failed miserably at that. And so that's where I think we have to be a little careful about calling him an ethnic cleanser.

WOODS: There's a fairly mainstream U.S. historian, Robert Remini, I think, who takes the view that Jackson certainly does not pass current-day standards of sensitivity, but on the other hand —

BIRZER: [laughing] That's an understatement, Tom.

WOODS: Right. But on the other hand, that his view was, well, I have two choices. I genuinely do not see a third choice. One choice is I do nothing, and the whites in the states where these Indians are presently located are going to just get rid of them. I mean, it's going to be awful. That's one option. The other option is I get these Indians out of the hands of those people, and I put them somewhere else, and then they'll be safe. And I know this sounds naive, but that was Remini's view. He said, I believe that is what Jackson imagined himself to be doing. Now, the brutality of the way they were moved and the casualties and all that, that's a separate question that Jackson wasn't involved in. But that was his primary motivation. I mean, if he wanted to have them all killed, he could have just sat there and done nothing and let nature take its course. So why would he have gone to all this trouble when he could have just done that for nothing? Answer: it's because he genuinely wanted to see them survive. So again, that's very unfashionable. And I don't say that thereby justifies Indian removal, but for heaven's sake, as historians, this shouldn't be a game. This should be a question of trying to understand what were the motivations of the actors that we're concerned with.

Now, I want to stay on schedule here, let's say, so there are a couple more issues that loom very large in the history of Jackson's presidential years. And one of them is one that historians today just can't — I mean, they can understand his view on the Nullification Crisis, because that would have been their view, but they cannot understand his obsession with the Second Bank of the United States. So are you going to defend him on that, or what's your position?

BIRZER: Actually, yeah, you know, for me, Tom — and you're going to be the expert on this. You will know this far better than I will. I only know what Jackson thought. You know the economics of it.

WOODS: But I think Jackson was 100% right in everything he thought on this issue, yeah.

BIRZER: So one of the things I've been asked a number of times since the book's come out is: what do I think of Harriet Tubman being put on the $20 bill? And my response is: Andrew Jackson would have never wanted to have been on fiat money. Ever. He's a hard-money man. And the idea that someone would put him in 1928 on a bill, on a Federal Reserve note would have been abhorrent to him in every way.

So Jackson came up with this language — and I don't think it's wrong, even though it sounds a little conspiratorial and a little extreme. He's really the one — along with people like William Leggett and Amos Kendall and some of the other more free market people of that era. Jackson really employees the language of parasites and producers. And so he talks quite a bit about anyone — what we would call crony capitalism now — that anyone who gets benefits from the government is essentially a parasite. They're living off the hardworking people who actually are laboring. And so they're not laboring. They're doing other things — that is, these parasites. So it's fascinating to me, and Tom, this is what he — just to quote Jackson, he says, "It is to be regretted that the rich and powerful too often bend the acts of government to their selfish purposes. Distinctions in society will always exist under every just government. Equality of talents, of education, or of wealth cannot be produced by human institutions." And that, I think he's absolutely right about that, that we certainly can't give privilege to anything.

And as Murray Rothbard showed, the bank was a disaster, economically as well as politically. And so I think Jackson was right. I think we needed to have, for the most part, private money, and I think Jackson pretty much allowed for money to be a commodity, to be traded, and we saw pretty good success overall in the 19th century. Not without a boom and bust cycle, of course, but as I understand it, Tom, the Austrians believe that's inevitable and healthy. So it seems like it was a good thing.

WOODS: Well, I'll put on the show notes page — which by the way, is TomWoods.com/1250. I have a little presentation I gave on the cycles of the 19th century, which there isn't as much written on as there should be. And you don't have to have them if you'll just — the more honest the money is, the fewer and shallower the recessions will be. But the years of the Independent Treasury, which came under Martin Van Buren, were some of the most stable years monetarily for the U.S. ever, even though historians are just blowing their tops over that.

But speaking of blowing their tops, let's talk about nullification, the Nullification Crisis. And on this, let me say I think Calhoun's wrong on the constitutional question, where he says that protective tariffs are unconstitutional because the constitution envisions tariffs as being engines of revenue production, whereas the purpose of a protective tariff is not to generate revenue, but rather to protect domestic producers. Calhoun says that this is at least against the spirit of the Constitution. But there's plenty of discussion in the years prior to the Constitution's adoption that makes clear people perfectly well expected protective tariffs to be constitutional. So I don't think he's right about that part of it. But what's the story of the Nullification Crisis, and when is it?

BIRZER: Yeah, so the Nullification Crisis is almost as personal as it was political. So it really begins in about 1830, but it gets very strong in 1832, when South Carolina does attempt to nullify federal law and there's immediate reaction by Andrew Jackson. Not only does he have troops ready to invade, he's got the Navy there, he has militia, he's got people all over that are about to do things to make sure that South Carolina will not nullify this law. And there's no question that Jackson uses the full force of the executive branch to do this.

Jackson is very unsure about the theory of nullification and union — that is, if you take it to the abstract. In the concrete, though, Jackson believes that as president, he is forced to hold together the Constitution in the name of the Union. I think we can agree or disagree with that, Tom. I think there are a lot of arguments. I think in the abstract, I agree with you almost 100%, maybe 100%. I think nullification is certainly a healthy thing. I think it's a very positive thing and a necessary thing.

Jackson, though, when push came to shove, decided to go against that. And his closest ally at the time was John Randolph of Roanoke. And Randolph wrote him a letter and said, "I know exactly how you're going to respond to this. And on this issue, we will have to part ways, but our friendship will remain." And I think that's a fascinating look at this. And I like that, that he was able to maintain that relationship with Randolph. Randolph, of course, will pass away here pretty quickly, but that they had that close of a relationship I think is important.

I think it's also critical to keep in mind, Tom, just the personal aspect of what was going on here.

WOODS: Yeah.

BIRZER: Jackson had — and stop me if I'm talking too long. But Jackson, of course, had thought during the War of 1812 and after that his main support was coming from John C. Calhoun within the Monroe administration.

WOODS: Oh, right.

BIRZER: As it turned out, it was John Quincy Adams who bent over backwards and staked all of his reputation on backing Andrew Jackson. Jackson didn't know that. And so when Andrew Jackson becomes president and he's looking through the papers in the White House in 1830, he comes across an 1819 letter from his vice president, John C. Calhoun, that recommends the military send an expeditionary force down to Florida to capture Jackson to try him and to hang him for treason.

Now, this was an utter shock to Jackson, who had assumed this whole decade that Calhoun was his friend. And now, that may be extreme to say that now he's going to turn around and hate Calhoun for it, but it's also very Andrew Jackson. And when Jackson confronted him about it, Calhoun at first denied it. And then he admitted, yes, I had done that. So in no way would I excuse — Tom, and I hope you know this. In no way would I excuse this unionist posture that Jackson takes because of a personal vendetta. But I think I'd also be remiss as a historian not to recognize that there was some very bad blood between those two, and not just between Jackson and Calhoun, but between Calhoun's wife and all the other wives in the cabinet.

WOODS: Yeah.

BIRZER: There was some really nasty stuff personally going on at that time.

WOODS: Well, it had to do with Jackson's own wife, Rachel.

BIRZER: Right.

WOODS: And maybe could you say a word about that? Because he had an extraordinary devotion to her, and the kind of gossiping that people were doing about her was, well, pretty disturbing to him.

BIRZER: Yeah, Tom, you know, I kind of fell in love with her, as well. Hardly anyone has written about her, and yet she wrote lots of letters. She was a very good writer. She was a really devout Presbyterian. She was really intellectually Jackson's equal, if not his superior. He relied on her advice all the time. In fact, he would hardly do anything without her consent. They talked problems out much like I think Abigail Adams and John Adams did. They had really beautiful relationship, to the point where it's almost mystical at times the way that Jackson reveres his wife.

In 1828, right before the election, Rachel Jackson, his wife, is in Nashville and finds a political tract that had been written against her, and it basically claimed that she was a prostitute and a woman of ill repute and it listed all these things, none of which, of course, were even remotely true. This lady was the stereotypical devout Presbyterian woman in every way. And she was so taken aback by this, that she actually had a heart attack, literally had a heart attack as she was reading this thing, and she died four days later. So this is why, when Jackson goes to Washington, he is incredibly bitter, and he wants revenge. He talks about that all the time. He's going to seek revenge on those who killed his wife. And he dresses in black for the whole first year of his presidency, and he's in a loss. He's in deep depression, frankly, during that whole first year.

WOODS: There's a parallel I think, between that and Richard Nixon and Pat Nixon, because when Pat Nixon — I don't remember which of the books it was by Woodward and Bernstein that she read, but apparently she read it and either she had a heart attack or she had some major medical thing.

BIRZER: Oh, I didn't know that.

WOODS: Yeah, and so, I mean, as if Nixon couldn't hate the press enough already.

BIRZER: Oh my gosh.

WOODS: Yeah, so I think it's a parallel with that and Andrew Jackson and his wife. But I think the thing with Jackson's wife was also fueled by these allegations that she was a bigamist.

BIRZER: Yeah.

WOODS: Because she had gotten married to Andrew Jackson before finalizing the dissolution of her previous marriage.

BIRZER: And that's true, Tom; she had. She didn't know that. Her first husband was a really abusive guy. We have all kinds of testimony for that. And amazingly enough, in Nashville at the time, all of Nashville consented to the marriage. They all thought it was a good marriage. But the local Presbyterian minister wouldn't marry them. So crazily enough, Andrew and Rachel went down into a Catholic area and had a priest nullify the original marriage, and then they had a Catholic wedding [laughing]. Talk about weird aspects of history. Not something we would expect. Then, of course, they went back and had a Presbyterian wedding after all. That was taken care of. But yes, she was married, but there was no scandal there. If she hadn't left that guy, she would have been a fool. He was an absolutely physical abuser in every way.

WOODS: All right, so as we draw this to a close, why don't you try to make, let's say, a 60-second elevator pitch for why —you don't have to necessarily hold Jackson up as your favorite person in the world, but why Brad Birzer at least thinks he deserves some respect?

BIRZER: Well, again, Tom, as I mentioned earlier, and without any hyperbole, this is my Tom Woods book. And one of the reasons that I wanted to write it — and it is very much inspired by what you've done — I really wanted to just say, *Look, PC crowd* — but Dinesh D'Souza's in that too. Y*ou guys have made this guy a devil, and it's too much. He's not a saint, either, but he's not a devil. And the fact that we have now taken him and made him the symbol of all evil — he's the ultimate slave owner, he's the nasty, imperialist capitalist. All of this that we've taken this just for granted over the last 20 years, I just think is reprehensible. And it's almost as though, in this polarized world, you can say of Andrew Jackson anything that's bad, and everybody will automatically accept it.*

So I don't think he's a perfect guy by any means, but I think that we do not only him a disservice, we do ourselves a disservice when we polarize things to such an extent that we're willing just to dismiss anybody on any accusation, or we just dismiss someone immediately for the view. Tom, I know you have this happen to you all the time, but I have been just shocked at how many people have just seen the title of my book and have automatically called me a racist. [laughing] Really? I mean, come on.

WOODS: Yeah. Yeah, they haven't even flipped through. They know they know Kavanaugh's guilty. And I don't know he's not guilty, but they know with certainty that he's guilty.

BIRZER: Absolutely.

WOODS: Yeah, in fact, I remember when my *Politically Incorrect Guide* came out, one of the early reviews says, "Can you believe somebody would write a book like this?" And then they list all these things that I'd never in a million years think or say, and then, "And then to top it off, he supports wars for oil."

BIRZER: [groans]

WOODS: But one of the best known things about me is my opposition to wars for oil. So they didn't even touch the book. They never touched it. So that's just something you have to deal with. I think it was a — I still can't remember the details. I think it was a stroke that Pat Nixon had, because I know I'm going to get people emailing me, correcting me on that. But it was some kind of thing that happened there.

All right, so what we'll do is, at TomWoods.com/1250, I'm going to link to *In Defense of Andrew Jackson*. It was either Harry or one of his colleagues who came up with the title for my book, actually, *The Politically Incorrect Guide to American History*. They handed me that title and said: okay, go. Here's the title. Now, go write the book.

BIRZER: That's very similar, yes.

WOODS: And in fact, on the cover of your book, I say something along the lines of: "I may not be much of an Andrew Jackson fan, but I'm a huge Brad Birzer fan."

BIRZER: I love that, Tom. That means so much to me.

WOODS: And Brad has written as engaging a defense of Jackson as you'll ever see, and it deserves to be reckoned with. So all you budding historians out there, check out *In Defense of Andrew Jackson* by the wonderful Brad Birzer, who is not only a great historian, but who also has tremendously wonderful taste in music. And let me commit publicly —

BIRZER: And friends, Tom. And friends.

WOODS: That's not least of the things that I cherish about Brad Birzer. But let me commit in public to make it even harder for me to back out this time, that in 2019, you and I are going to Montreal for Marillion Weekend.

BIRZER: I am so looking forward to that, Tom [laughing].

WOODS: Yeah, yeah, and the thing is —

BIRZER: You can't see me right now, but my face is red, my ears are red, I'm smiling —

WOODS: Well, unfortunately, most of my listeners won't know what Marillion is, but they are one of our favorite bands. And in fact, back a long time ago, I interviewed the man who's the second lead singer of the band, but who's been there for so long. He's really the main guy. And that's Steve Hogarth. I actually had him on. And in fact, I'm doing a search right now. Oh my gosh, it's Episode 110, TomWoods.com/110. And the interview with Hogarth is so interesting, because, first of all, he's a fun guy to talk to. I mean, it was amazing how we hit it off very nicely. But also his story of how they went from a band with European appeal that just could not make a U.S. tour pay, to this amazing band that took advantage of internet technology to crowdfund their tours, so they could have the liquid capital necessary to get started, and even to crowdfund the recording of some of the *Arachnophobia* album and stuff. And this was in the late '90s. And Steve said, "Well, we decided that whatever this internet thing is, we better get on it." So it's a great conversation, TomWoods.com/110. You can go listen to it after you get your copy of Brad Birzer's book, *In Defense of Andrew Jackson*, TomWoods .com/1250. As I say, it's quite possible, as you could see, to disagree strongly with Jackson, but nevertheless find an impartial telling of his period of American history to be valuable. So Brad, thank you very much, and we'll talk to soon.

BIRZER: Tom, it's always great talking to you. Thank you so much.