Episode 851: Thomas Jefferson, Revolutionary: A Radical's Struggle to Remake America

Guest: Kevin Gutzman

WOODS: Well, you know I'm a big fan of yours, of course, and I love this book. I find the organization intriguing. It's not another book taking you from Jefferson's childhood to his old age. It's organized thematically along the lines of five areas of his life intellectually and politically that mattered the most to him in terms of what made him Thomas Jefferson and his most significant political commitments — so religious liberty and federalism and so on.

So it's a very interesting treatment, and of course, even though it's published by St. Martin's — which is a totally mainstream press, of course, and that's tremendous for you. You've gotten plaudits for this book by scholars who matter and this is all great. But I think also what's neat is that you've been able to convey a Jefferson that is somewhat different from the Jefferson that we get in popular culture, and certainly it's different from the Jefferson some people have tried to portray, as — I've read some people try to claim that Jefferson didn't really think that property rights were natural rights or that he was a proto-socialist is some ways, this and that. So you're taking all this on.

First of all, tell me about book clubs and this book and the kind of critical reception it's gotten, because it seems to me this could be your most celebrated work so far.

GUTZMAN: Well, thank you. Actually, my immediate previous book was a biography of Jefferson's best friend, James Madison, and James Madison is an interesting fellow, but his life lends itself to a biographical, kind of birth-to-death treatment, because he's only really interesting on one score, and that is on the score of trying to implement a republican written constitution. On the other hand, Jefferson was a man of illimitable breadth, and I think then that to try to say, Okay, here's where he was born, here's what his family was like, here's how he ignored his mother in his letters, and so on, doesn't really leave space to give the impression of the diversity of areas in which he is of significance and of the multitude of different kinds of questions that interested him.

He was somebody who would take up an issue or a topic and become so expert in it that he was the leading figure of his time. So for example, he was of course a brilliant architect. Just beyond brilliant. In fact, anybody who's not familiar with his brilliance as an architect can easily go online and just Google "Jefferson University of Virginia sketches" and find the drawings he made of what ultimately became the essential

grounds at UVA, which of course the American Institute of Architects at the time of the bicentennial voted as America's outstanding architectural achievement.

He was interested in ethnography, ethnohistory, American Indians, and he conducted the first scientific archeological excavation ever in the Western Hemisphere on an Indian burial mound near his home. He had the idea that he would prove that reigning theory was wrong and that really the original human languages were American Indian languages, and so he gathered dozens of lexicons of American Indian people with the idea of writing a book about this subject and vindicating North America.

He was patriotic in the sense that he argued that what European biologists were saying about the Western Hemisphere was mistaken, and really, vertebrate life forms did not degenerate here. And the way that he tried to prove that this was true, the reigning theory was that every kind of vertebrate thing was of a degenerate form in the West, and that included man. So he took up the cause of American Indians and tried to demonstrate that they were as intellectually and physically capable as Europeans.

And of course, famously — I tell my students if you want to get some idea of Jefferson's brilliance, just go into the library, find a book of his writings, pick it up, open at random, read four or five sentences, and think, I wish for ten minutes of my life I could write like that.

So what I've done in the book is, as you said, not try to give you a life and times, but instead, I've taken some of his most significant political and intellectual commitments and shown how they played out through his life. So of course he was famously — and I think this is the way people think of him if they think of him now. He was famously president of the United States and the chief author of the Declaration of Independence, and scholars now generally think that he had a sexual relationship with one of his slaves. And those are probably the things people think of when they think of him, if they think of him.

But he was also the most significant radical — and I use that word guardedly. He was the most significant radical statesman ever in America. So think of it this way: historians have a general kind of thesis that dukes don't emigrate. That is, if you're born at the top of your society, you're not going to leave. You're not going to be born the Duke of Westminster and think, You know, I'd rather own a pizza restaurant in Australia. That's what I'm going to do. I'm going to move there.

But Jefferson did something that was analogous to that. He was born to the man who was the leading resident of Albemarle County in Piedmont, Virginia, and the chief supports of his father's and thus his status were the link to the English monarchy, the established church of Virginia, the institution of slavery, and the feudal land tenures that kept property ownership within a very few hands in Virginia. And Holly Brewer, a historian then at North Carolina State, calculated about 20 years ago that when Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence, about two-thirds of today's Virginia land was held in about 85 hands, 85 pairs of hands, 85 families.

So Jefferson was responsible as much as anyone other than George Washington for severing ties to the king of England. He was the fellow who wrote the law getting rid of the feudal land tenures in Virginia so that instead of primogeniture — that is, the

oldest son inheriting everything and an entail, which meant that none of one of these estates could be alienated even by its current holder — in other words, if you inherited one of these gigantic estates, you couldn't sell any of it because your son was entitled to inherit it too. Jefferson wrote the law that got rid of that land regime, and by the time he died 50 years later, those landed estates had all broken up.

He also was the fellow who was chiefly responsible for the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, which made Virginia the first officially secular society in the history of the world, the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom.

And finally, he — and I devoted an entire chapter of the book to this. He moved against slavery. First he made significant attempts in the legislature to put slavery on train to extinction. Then he says, When we did this, I saw that my coagitor in it, Richard Bland, who was an older burgess and a relative of Jefferson's, just was attacked all day long. People stood up one after another in the Burgesses and decried him as an enemy to his colony and so on. And so Jefferson said, I determined at that point the Virginians weren't ready to get rid of slavery. But what he did for the rest of his life was, first he laid out a cogent argument against slavery. He insisted it was morally unacceptable and inconsistent with his political principles, and so he cast about for some solution to the problem of the existence of slavery in Virginia.

And finally, he lit on an idea that later people called colonization, which was the idea that, well — he didn't think that black and white people could get along indefinitely in Virginia, and so because they were entitled to self-government as any other person was, black people had to be found some other place to which they could be sent. And ultimately, this led to the establishment of the West African country of Liberia, which was sponsored by Jefferson's former law student and political ally, James Monroe. And even today, the capital of Liberia is called Monrovia after Monroe. The first people who settled there were former slaves, most of them. Some of them, native free blacks from the United States.

So the sweep of Jefferson's reform efforts is just amazing, and it's often ignored. People don't recognize that he was a great legislator, and that I think is the main thing the book is about.

WOODS: Kevin, I think the section of the book that I would like to spend the least time on, oddly enough, is federalism, only because there have been so many episodes of the show where I've gone through and explained the ideas of the Kentucky Resolutions of 1798. So I think — I'm not saying that everybody listening to the show is the world's foremost expert on this stuff, but they know a heck of a lot more than the general public. But having said that, I agree with Marco Bassani that when you read that beautiful Kentucky Resolutions of 1798, you really are getting the best, most developed Jeffersonian take on the nature of the union.

But my question is, you know, he doesn't die until the mid 1820s, and yet we don't see anything quite this radical about federalism from him between then and his death. I mean, some references to it, but nothing quite as confrontational. Is that because he had second thoughts about nullification?

GUTZMAN: No, I actually don't accept the premise of your question.

WOODS: Good, I'm glad. I didn't want you to. That's good.

GUTZMAN: [laughing] In 1825, unhappy with the fact that the Hamiltonian tariff program had been dusted off by the new president, John Quincy Adams, Jefferson wrote a draft set of resolutions that he hoped that the Virginia legislature would pass, essentially laying out the old argument from 1798 again: we're not going to accept having the federal government exercise powers it hasn't been delegated. We think that this particular program is unjust to us and we will resist. And unfortunately, when he passed that along to his friend Madison, as was his chief weakness, his chief bad tendency, Madison talked him into not being confrontational right now.

So Jefferson essentially went to his death listening to Madison one more time, but he still had the old doctrine in mind. There never was a point when he didn't think that this had to be asserted, that this was a live option, that Virginia came first and the federal union was for Virginians' convenience, from their point of view. And I show in the chapter on federalism that he was more of a radical in this connection than most people realize.

One of the main things I hope that people will get out of the book is that the main scholars of Jefferson, the most famous ones — Dumas Malone and Merrill Peterson and so on — have tried to obfuscate this point. For one thing, Merrill Peterson edited the Library of Virginia edition of Jefferson's writings, and he excluded a lot of the main documents having to do with Jefferson's confrontational federalism. So for example, his 1825 resolutions aren't included, and there are several of the letters Jefferson wrote about this question that aren't included in the Library of America book and Thomas Jefferson writings.

One of them is the petition that he wrote in 1797 for his fellow citizens of Albemarle County to present to the General Assembly in response to the fact that a federal grand jury in Richmond had handed up a presentment against their congressman, Samuel Cabell, for having dared to criticize John Adams' foreign policy. So Jefferson thought at that point that the Richmond federal grand jurors should be indicted for treason against Virginia. Well, you might think that was pretty interesting, but that's not in the Library of America volume of Thomas Jefferson's writings, even though it's I think about the thickets volume in the entire series going to about 1,500 pages.

And Peterson in his book, *Thomas Jefferson and the New Nation*, which has been considered the leading one-volume biography of Jefferson for nearly half a century since it came out now, Peterson says that Jefferson's devotion to federalism or states' rights or whatever you want to call it was not the main element of his constitutionalism or his legacy, but it was the saddest. And I don't think it's the saddest at all. It's the first thing that he was known for in 1774 with *A Summary View of the Rights of British America*, and it runs through everything that he wrote about the federal system from that point in 1774 until, as I said before, 1825.

So I hope that people who read this book will, even if they think they know, for example, about 1798 very well, will find in it material that they haven't seen put in this context before. I don't know of any book that gives the entire story with attention to 1797 and 1825 and the various other things that are discussed in this book. I hope it's the best chapter in the book.

WOODS: Well, I think it is. I made reference to the 1825 resolutions briefly in my book *Nullification*, but I didn't know about those until I started that project.

GUTZMAN: Right.

WOODS: It wasn't like they've just been reported to me over and over and they'd become hackneyed. I'd never even heard about them before. Let's skip ahead to the end — and then we'll backtrack. Let's go to something that today might seem less controversial: the University of Virginia, but also Jefferson's views on education more generally. Let's start there. We often get people who support public education holding up Thomas Jefferson as a great champion, and they quote all the things he says about how wonderful public education would be. And then they leave out the next sentence where he says, Of course we have to amend the Constitution to allow for a federally funded system or whatever. We'd have to amend the Constitution. They don't put that part in, of course. So why should I overlook this and say — Why shouldn't I instead say, "Look, Jefferson, I get that you're a radical and you like equality and blah, blah, blah. But public education? Come on, now. You can't use your imagination about how kids could be educated?"

GUTZMAN: [laughing] Well, I'm not advocating public education in the chapter about Jefferson and education. But recall what I was saying at the very beginning of our conversation about the society into which Jefferson was born. Not only was there enormous concentration of landholding in Virginia — and again, about two-thirds of today's Virginia was owned by 85 families. Another way of putting that is those 85 or so families each owned about 300 square miles of Virginia. So today, I live in Connecticut, where we have eight counties, and 300 square miles is about half of a Connecticut county. So that's as if 16 people owned Connecticut today. It was an enormous concentration of wealth, and there was no public education at all in Virginia.

So we think about half of Virginian adult white males of sound mind were illiterate. And this was, Jefferson thought, like the concentration of landholdings, almost an absolute bar to an actual republican society, and he thought the solution to that was to have kind of regional primary schools where every child — he seems to have thought at first free children, and this included girls — should have at least three years of reading, writing, and arithmetic.

But when a Quaker reformer wrote to him several years after he first drafted a bill about this and said, Well, I'm looking into the possibility of public education for slaves too, Jefferson wrote back and said, Well, if you read my Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge, you'll see that it doesn't exclude the possibility of having slaves be covered. In fact, the language seems to include them, and I don't think there's any difficulty with that. Although he said, I'm not sure that somebody who's going to be in that condition would be happier if he were educated. So he thought that was an interesting problem.

But anyway, the point is Jefferson thought if you were going to have a republican society, voters had to be at least literate, and they had to have at least numeracy. And then he thought, okay, after that, what do we want to come of this? What we want is not to have to rely for the sons of the wealthy to be the political and economic

leaders of Virginia; we'd like to be able to kind of comb through the entire mound of Virginia humanity and cull out the very ablest people, regardless of their family backgrounds. And he thought the way to do that was to select the best performers in these primary schools and send them off ultimately to reformed College of William and Mary at public expense.

Now, he thought this would be impossible to do without having the public funding the education of these not wealthy types who would now be going off to William and Mary. This is entirely a product of the time in which Jefferson lived. It has nothing to do with the idea that if he lived now he would want the teachers' unions to be in control of every kid's education. That's not what I'm saying.

And in fact, one of these — and why in his own lifetime, Jefferson was not successful in shepherding the idea of publicly financed primary and secondary schools through to adoption was that one of his long-time political allies, William Branch Giles, argued against his proposal that what it would mean would be that you'd have primary and secondary school teachers all over Virginia; likely, said Giles, they would become politically mobilized, and then this association of credentialed pedagogues would be the most important political influence on the Virginia government. So Giles said this alone is reason not to have public schools. That's of course an interesting insight, we might think is congenial now.

But so in his lifetime, his proposal for primary and secondary schooling for all Virginian children was not adopted, and the main reason seems to have been that wealthy people just didn't want to pay for it. That was what Jefferson and his political ally Governor John Tyler and other people in the political elite who were interested in this project thought.

But famously, what he was successful in doing was getting the General Assembly to establish the University of Virginia. Now, today we think, well, Hawaii has a state university and Alabama has a state university, Connecticut has a state university, Virginia has the University of Virginia, big flipping deal. But it was a big deal because, to a large extent, all of the other state universities now are actually little UVAs. They are far more akin to UVA than they are to anything that had come before UVA. UVA was a radically different kind of a post-secondary education institution. In fact, by the time Jefferson died, the fellow who was the president of Yale said, well, you know, the University of Virginia is really the only university in America. The others are all just colleges.

So let me say a couple of words about what made UVA revolutionary, and I think people will see that yes, other post-secondary educational institutions in America now are almost all like UVA. And what do I mean by that? Well, first, if you were going to Harvard or Yale or William and Mary in Jefferson's day, you would be assigned to memorize particular things. And then you would show up for class and you'd be sitting there with other probably wealthy young men, and your proctor would tell you to stand up, and you would stand up and you would recite whatever grammatical table from Greek you had memorized over the previous couple of days, or whatever mathematical calculations you had memorized. Recitation was what a class was, and this was the way that students' performance was evaluated, was by seeing how well they could recite. And Jefferson said, Well, this doesn't require any thinking. We

should have essay examinations. And essay examinations had never been used anywhere. And of course nowadays, essay examinations are used everywhere.

Besides that, the University of Virginia was going to remove Greek and Latin from their prime place in the instruction of the youth, and instead, Jefferson said he would like — first he would like people to have choice in what classes they took, but when it came to languages, he far preferred for them to be learning French or Italian or Spanish, because those might be useful. And the only use, he thought — and he loved Greek and Latin, by the way. He carried around Greek and Latin books with him all the time, all the way to his death, he would go out to ride in the morning, and he would have two volumes of his multivolume edition of Plutarch in the original Greek in his coat. He would stop on his horse and read Plutarch all the time. But he thought it was impractical. You had to be a wealthy guy really to get anything out of that. So he wanted to downplay Greek and Latin and replace them with modern languages.

Besides that, he wanted UVA to have, as I said before, a curricular structure that was basically freeform like Brown today, where people could come and study what they wanted to study. So if you wanted to work on chemistry or physics or biology or agronomy or whatever was your interest, you could study that instead. This was completely unknown at the time too, and now most people who go to college are going to take some language; it's almost certainly not going to be Greek or Latin. If they had a curricular question, it would be up to them to decide what curriculum they want to follow. There wouldn't be some mandated general curriculum that everybody had to take.

Besides that, Jefferson thought that the University of Virginia should be governed by its faculty, not by politicians or not by the people who founded the place. And you take all of these elements of the original structure of the University of Virginia for granted at, as I said before, the University of Hawaii, the University of Alabama, the University of Connecticut. So I could go on, but the point is this was completely unlike what was going on at the time. And now just all of what I've just said is generally accepted. UVA was also the first school in America that had a professor of medicine. It had, I think, the third or maybe the second professor of law. It was an actual university.

And one thing that made it different from what we take for granted now when it comes to post-secondary school, though, is Jefferson thought, well, you're never really senior in learning. I don't consider myself a senior in learning, so I don't think we should call people seniors. We'll just have first-year students, second-year students, third-year students. And that's what they still do at UVA. They don't have seniors or juniors.

And he thought you could go for a year or two, study whatever it was you wanted to study, go back to wherever you were doing your work, and if you thought you needed more instruction, show up again, and it was going to be kind of a village that you could just kind of visit. It wouldn't be a structured four-year plan leading to fluency in Greek and Latin and connection to all the other wealthy guys in your state, which is what you would be getting if you'd gone to Yale, say, at the time Jefferson was devising this.

And while he was devising this, he was in correspondence with people at Yale and Harvard, and they were telling him, You know what? I actually like this idea — said one friend of his that was on the faculty at Harvard — I like this idea of essay examinations, but when I raised it with my colleagues, they all said no. And actually, from the time UVA opened, I think in 1821 to students, until Harvard adopted this means of evaluating performance was 33 more years. So it was revolutionary, and all of these changes that Jefferson envisioned ultimately were going to become virtually universal.

WOODS: Let's talk about — now, of course, you've written a chapter on each of these two things, so bear in mind it has to be radio friendly. But let's talk about the difference between Jefferson's views on what is to become of American blacks and what was to become of American Indians and why the difference.

GUTZMAN: Okay, Jefferson from an early time was exposed to American Indians, and of course also to blacks. His father was a significant slaveholder and was in the western part of Virginia, which is the Piedmont region. And because he was the most prominent white man in the area, he frequently had American Indian visitors. And so Jefferson grew up with a positive impression of these people.

I said before that in his youth he conducted a scientific archeological excavation on a burial mound near his home, and he later would collect lexicons. In fact, one thing that he told Lewis and Clark to do en route to the Pacific was to collect lexicons of the American Indian peoples they encountered. He gave them a lengthy list of English words and concepts he wanted them to have the Indians translate for him — in other words, point to a bird and ask the Indian what the word is for that, point to the sky, and so on. And so he had this interest at an early point.

And then because he was a man of the Enlightenment, the transatlantic Republic of Letters, he read widely in European biology. And the leading European biologist of the late 18th century was a Frenchman, the Comte de Buffon. And Buffon argued that mammals degenerated in the Western Hemisphere. He said there are fewer of them, they're smaller than European or African ones, they're just less than the ones you find in the Eastern Hemisphere. And the reason, Buffon said, is the environment in North America.

So Jefferson decided, well, I'm going to defend the honor of my country. And one other thing he told Lewis and Clark to do was he said, When you encounter wooly mammoths, kill one and bring it home. So people didn't know that the wooly mammoth was extinct. Jefferson expected that Lewis and Clark would encounter one and they could bring one home for the vindication of America's honor. Well, of course they didn't encounter a wooly mammoth, but they did give him moose, which he cut into parts, boxed up, and mailed to Buffon.

So part of the reason why he envisioned trying to incorporate American Indians into American society was that he had had this positive impression of them, I think, and part of it I think was for this propaganda purpose to show that it was a good idea to emigrate from Europe to North America. You shouldn't be dissuaded from your desire to do that by this argument that if you did you'd degenerate. You'd become less intelligent, less fertile, and so on, as Buffon was arguing. And Jefferson advocated this

in his book *Notes on the State of Virginia*. He tried to show that American Indians were the equal of the white man in basically every way.

On the other hand, when it came to blacks, he described them at great length in a famous portion of *Notes on the State of Virginia*, which is the query on the laws of Virginia. He went into the laws about slavery, and then that led him into discussing slaves' attributes, physical and mental. And then he said he'd hazard at a guess but he wasn't certain of it that they were inferior, both in body and in mind. But he said, But, even if they were inferior in mind, that would not mean that whites were entitled to rule them. He said at one point that Newton was superior to us all; it did not mean he was entitled to be our dictator.

So Jefferson had the idea too that, as he put it, the whites are prejudiced against the blacks, and the blacks hates us and we give them new reasons every day. Here he's speaking for white Virginians. So he said the only solutions that he saw to the problem of blacks and whites together in Virginia and blacks being entitled to the right of self-government, as all other people were, was to find somewhere other than Virginia where they could enjoy that right.

So through his political career while he was engaged in various other acts of statesmanship he was involved in, he was seeking out a place to which expatriate black people from North America could be sent. And at various points, he inquired of the British government about Canada. He had American diplomats in Britain inquire the British government about Sierra Leone. He thought about the idea of having Michigan or Minnesota or somewhere in the Midwest be the place to which slaves from Virginia could be sent. And he had other ideas about this too, but the one on which the Virginia Republicans finally lit, of course, was Liberia.

Jefferson thought that that was inadequate, however, and still was interested in this topic to the end of us life. Unlike other people, he was optimistic that this finally would be resolved, and he thought that it had to be resolved by the freeing the slaves and the expatriation because he thought that if that didn't happen, there'd be a race war that could not end, he said, but in the extinction of the one or the other race. And he thought it obvious that the more numerous and armed white people would be the winners in a war.

So when he first wrote at length about this issue in *Notes About the State of Virginia*, it was theoretical, but of course about a decade later, began on Saint-Domingue what ultimately became the only successful slave rebellion in the Western Hemisphere, which was the establishment of Haiti. And of course, one part of that story is that by the end of it, every white person in Haiti was either dead or fled. So Jefferson thought, well, this just vindicates my feeling about what would happen in Virginia if we tried freeing blacks and not expatriating them.

Notice, however, that although he had this uncharacteristically negative expectation or uncharacteristic dearth of optimism in connection with a biracial society, he did believe that ultimately the problem would be resolved and that blacks would have their self-government. So in that sense, you might think, well, that is a manifestation of his weakness of just kind of having a Panglossian attitude or a Panglossian mindset. And of course one of the most interesting features of the America story is that

although slaves ultimately were freed, there never was really any significant — there wasn't widespread black violence against white people after the end of slavery. Jefferson was wrong about that. The slaves didn't prove to be — the former slaved didn't prove to be murderously angry, as he thought they would prove to be.

WOODS: Well, finally let's say something about your chapter on the freedom of conscience — and just enough, because we probably are hitting the limits of time, for people to see the significance of this, because it seems to commonplace now that people would think that there shouldn't be — people shouldn't have cruelties inflicted upon them because of their religious beliefs. Everybody takes that as so obvious that to look back on what Jefferson and Madison had to say about it, it's kind of quaint and sweet, but, well, big deal; doesn't everybody think that way? So I think it's made people become blasé about this.

GUTZMAN: Right. Well, as I've been writing these two books about Madison and Jefferson, I've realized how the fact that the people who are kind of short-term referred to as the Founding Fathers, their success' thoroughness makes us appreciate them less. So, for example, George Washington's on the coinage; his birthday's a holiday, although it's no longer usually even called by his name. And people don't even know why that should be. Why should he even be remembered? And the answer of course is, well, he's the one who established that the generals are subordinate to the civilians and the president retires. Those are two of the main principles of American government and we take them for granted, but look what societies are like where these things aren't true.

And the same goes for Jefferson and Madison when it comes to this question of imposition, enforcement of religion on people. Look at your TV any night in America. We don't have homosexuals being thrown off buildings. We don't have fathers throwing acid in their daughters' faces for dating the wrong boy. We don't have women wearing covering from head to toe. We don't have people being made to pay taxes for religions that they hate. And why is this? Well, the people chiefly responsible for the fact that we don't have those things are Thomas Jefferson and James Madison. Now, of course they weren't alone. They persuaded their contemporaries in most of the country that this was a good idea to have freedom of conscience. But the fact that we take it for granted just shows that we're all Jeffersonians now.

When Jefferson was born — I mentioned before that he was born to the wealthiest man in Albemarle County in Piedmont, Virginia, and Virginia had a state church, which was the Church of England. And in Virginia you had to pay for the Church of England. The law required you to attend. If you had gone out in a public square and said Jesus' mother was not a virgin or Jesus didn't rise from the dead or it's cockamamie to say (name your Christian dogma), you theoretically could have been burned at the stake. There was serious force behind the established church. And in fact, in Jefferson's and Madison's time, people in their region of Virginia were punished for non-participation or for lack of support for the church. And Jefferson thought this just shouldn't be. It's inconsistent with — first he argued it's inconsistent with Christianity, but his chief contention was it's just nonsensical.

And so in his Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, he begins by saying that God has made the mind of man free, and then later on he says all the government can do by

enforcing religious dogma on you is make you a hypocrite or a liar. So if you say, for example, as they did in Massachusetts after the adoption of the current Massachusetts Constitution from 1780 to 1833, if you were going to be governor, you had to swear that you believed in God. And so Jefferson's point was, well, some fellow's been elected governor and he doesn't believe in God. Is he going to say, Oh, well, I guess I won't be governor? Or is he going to lie and say he believes in God? So his government made him into a Christian? Or has it just made him into a liar? So he thought the whole enterprise was nonsensical, and he argued that Jesus could have forced us all to be Christians but he didn't.

And in the end, other people in Virginia and many of them prominent Episcopalians, people that actually were religious — Jefferson was not — they greed with this too. They thought punishing people for their beliefs or lack of same didn't make sense, and saying that if you were an evangelical you couldn't be in the legislature, as was true in England, that didn't make sense either. So Jefferson thought that the adoption in Virginia of this policy was one of his most important accomplishments.

But another point to notice about this is he thought this was entirely a matter that should be treated federally. That is, while he thought Virginia had made the right decision in adopting this position of secularism, it was entirely up to Connecticut to keep its state church if it wanted to. So the federal constitution meant that the federal government wouldn't be declaring everybody has to be Lutheran or everybody has to be a Catholic or whatever, but if Connecticut wanted to keep its establishment, well, that was up to Connecticut. So he had his policy preference, but he also forever came back to this federalism principle, which was the central principle of his statesmanship.

WOODS: Well, Kevin, I think I'd like to get you back sometime in the next maybe couple of weeks and talk about other historians' misconceptions of Jefferson. Why is the Gutzman Jefferson the correct one and theirs is kind of screwy, because there have been, as you know, varying interpretations of Jefferson's life and the significance of what he did. And the way they characterize him, the way they describe his thinking, it's not all the way you do. And yet I can see from the primary sources that you're right, so I'd like to know where the mistakes are. So let's do that at some point.

But for right now, I'm linking to this book, *Thomas Jefferson, Revolutionary: A Radical Struggle to Remake America*, at TomWoods.com/851, and I urge people to check it out. Kevin, best of luck, and congratulations on this great book.

GUTZMAN: Thank you much, Tom.