

Monday Evening, April 22, 2019



MILITARY RELIGIOUS FREEDOM
f o u n d a t i o n

CROOKS & LIARS
COVERS MRFF

**Air Force Academy Shrouded In
Embarrassing Easter Pseudo-Science**

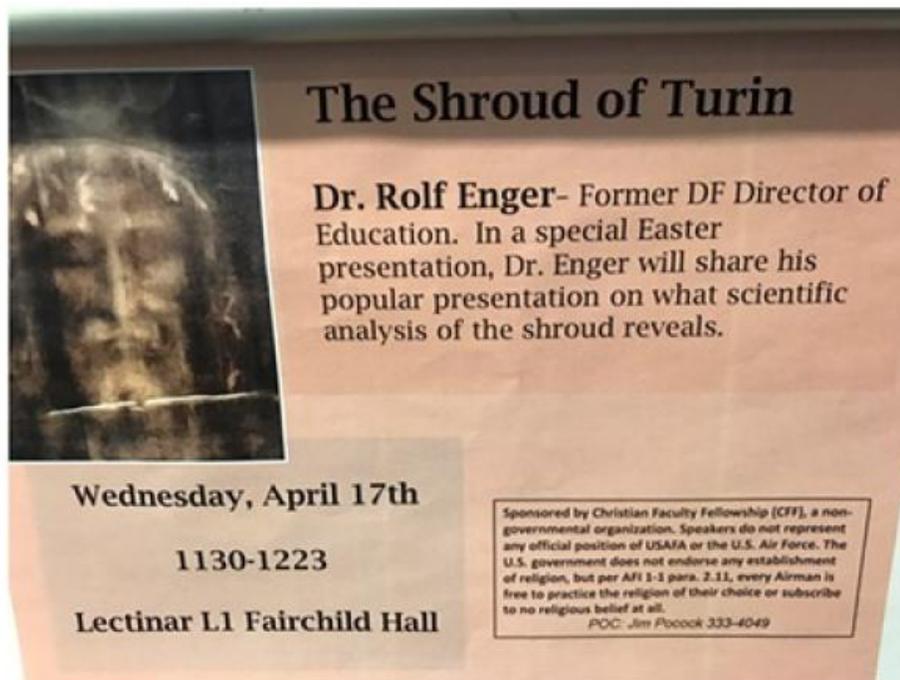


Photo Credit: Crooks & Liars

By: Paul Rosenberg

Monday, April 22, 2019

(Excerpts from Crooks & Liars/Emphasis added by MRFF)

As first reported by Pam Zubek at the Colorado Springs Independent, on Wednesday, April 17, the Air Force Academy hosted a talk promoting the alleged authenticity of the “Shroud of Turin,” which carbon dating and other evidence strongly indicates is actually a 14th-century forgery, as pointed out by Academy computer science professor Barry Fagin.

“I’ve been at the Academy for 25 years and in that time I’ve heard this talk 3 times,” Fagin told Crooks and Liars. “I find these talks to be embarrassing.”

[...]

Military Religious Freedom Foundation founder Mikey Weinstein told the Independent that 23 people — cadets, faculty and staff — had complained to him about the lecture. (Fifteen are Christians, he later told Crooks and Liars.)

[...]

“Our job is to be the voice that the 23 faculty members, cadets and staff —15 of whom are Christians—are not allowed to speak with,” Weinstein said. **“They fear – and rightfully fear—the four R’s: reprisal, retribution, revenge, and retaliation.”**

[...]

“You're probably getting bullshit science, but that's beside the point. That's bad enough, and the school that prides itself on being a science and technical school, but again, what do the sheep do, when the hungry lion is there? You fight back, your career is over.

[Click to Read on Crooks & Liars](#)

BACKGROUND ON USAFA's SHAMEFUL SHROUD PRESENTATION

COLORADO SPRINGS INDEPENDENT COVERS MRFF

Air Force Academy hosts talk of Shroud of Turin's alleged authenticity

By: Pam Zubeck

Thursday, April 18, 2019

(Excerpts from Colorado Springs Independent/Emphasis added by MRFF)

The Air Force Academy allowed former physics professor Rolf Enger to present a talk espousing the authenticity of the Shroud of Turin, the discredited "burial cloth" of Jesus Christ. The lecture happened this week, during the school day, in an academic classroom during a "special Easter presentation."

Some say the talk, which took place four days before Easter, **violated the military's prohibition against favoring one religion over another.** That's

especially bothersome, they say, given the history of allegations that **the Academy promotes fundamental Christianity as a ticket to promotions and favored treatment.**

[...]

Military Religious Freedom Foundation founder Mikey Weinstein says that 23 people — cadets, faculty and staff — complained to him about the lecture. **A vocal critic of what he views as the Academy's religious bias, Weinstein, a 1977 Academy grad, started his foundation in 2004.**

[...]

"The command climate is so toxic there, they have to come to us," Weinstein says. "It's the utter hypocrisy from a school that prides itself on honor code, character and leadership, honesty, integrity — all of these great things, but viciously violating the Constitution, its case law and directions and instructions."

Retired Brig Gen. Marty France, a former permanent professor and department head of the astronautics department who now serves on MRFF's advisory board, wrote to Vice Superintendent Houston Cantwell and Superintendent Jay Silveria expressing concern over the lecture.

"My colleagues were shocked that this sort of briefing, not even hiding its relationship to a specific religious belief (but proclaiming it) would be held during the duty day," France wrote in the letter, obtained by the Indy.

[...]

As Weinstein tells the Indy, "It would be one thing to do it from a religious perspective, but it's an embarrassing lack of science at a technically science school."

[...]

[Click to Read on Colorado Springs Independent](#)

**MRFF Advisory Board Member Marty France,
USAF Brig. Gen. (Ret.), Sends Complaint
to USAFA's Vice Superintendent
Col. Houstin R. Cantwell, and USAFA's Superintendent
Lt. Gen. Jay Silveria**

From: Martin France [email address withheld]

Sent: Thursday, April 18, 2019 8:42 AM

To: Cantwell, Houston R Col USAF USAFA\CV <email address withheld>
Cc: Silveria, Jay B Lt Gen USAF USAFA USAFA/CC <email address withheld>; Mikey Weinstein <mikey@militaryreligiousfreedom.org>
Subject: AFI1-1 Violation

Houston,

I've now heard independently from two of my former colleagues (and Mikey's heard from several others) about a widely advertised talk given at USAFA yesterday during duty hours, in Fairchild Hall--in fact a "Special Easter Presentation." Please see the attached photo.

As I'm sure you're by now aware, AFI1-1 states: 2.12. Balance of Free Exercise of Religion and Establishment Clause. Leaders at all levels must balance constitutional protections for their own free exercise of religion, including individual expressions of religious beliefs, and the constitutional prohibition against governmental establishment of religion. They must ensure their words and actions cannot reasonably be construed to be officially endorsing or disapproving of, or extending preferential treatment for any faith, belief, or absence of belief.

My colleagues were shocked that this sort of briefing, not even hiding its relationship to a specific religious belief (but proclaiming it) would be held during the duty day. Sure, it's voluntary, but when many of the attendees are in uniform, wearing rank, and in supervisory roles, we know that judgments are made. Moreover, just posting these flyers requires DF approval, so it's fair to assume that this is the endorsed position of the Dean.

Houston, it's all about time and place. Dr Enger is free to present his "research" based on some legend that the Academy has endorsed since the Frank J Seiler Research Lab misused taxpayer money back in the 70s and 80s in an attempt to prove the authenticity of this found piece of cloth (spoiler alert--it didn't really come from the presumed era or region of Jesus). I'm old enough to have been subjected to some of these briefings as a cadet and junior officer. It was wrong for the government to do it then, and it's wrong to provide a platform during the duty day to present it now.

If the chaplains and Dr Pocock (long a problem on the faculty for openly espousing his views in the classroom to cadets) want a "special Easter presentation", then they should use the chaplains' facilities (Cadet Chapel, Oases, Community Center Chapel) and hold it outside of duty time for those that are interested, wearing civilian clothes. Had that been the case, I wouldn't be writing you and my former colleagues wouldn't be so concerned.

It appears to many that the fundamentalists at USAFA have bided their time and are now exerting their influence again, emboldened by developments in our government. This frightens my colleagues, Christian and non, so much that they are unwilling to use the chain of command to voice their complaints--the same chain that endorsed this event. It's long been open season on the messenger at USAFA and they now think that the bag limits have just been increased.

I'm copying Mikey Weinstein on this, as you can see. I'm doing this in my role as an Advisory Board Member of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation.

I'd appreciate your thoughts on this matter.

*Cheers,
Marty*

**Weak Response from
USAFA's Col. Houston**

From: "Cantwell, Houston R Col USAF USAFA\CV"
<email address withheld>
Subject: RE: AFI1-1 Violation
Date: April 18, 2019 at 10:49:30 PM MDT
To: 'Martin France' <email address withheld>
Cc: Mikey Weinstein <mikey@militaryreligiousfreedom.org>

Sir,

Thanks for bringing this to our attention and your continued service to our community. We welcome the feedback. As you're aware, we take AFI 1-1 seriously, and opinion pieces like this keep the issue fresh in our minds.

*VR
Houston*

*HOUSTON R. CANTWELL, Colonel, USAF
Vice Superintendent
United States Air Force Academy CO*

**2012 USAFA Graduate Who is Active Military
Expresses Appreciation to MRFF for
Bringing USAFA Shroud Issue to the Forefront**

From: *MRFF Client's E-Mail Address Withheld*
Subject: Dr. Rolf Enger
Date: April 20, 2019 at 7:48:09 AM MDT
To: info@militaryreligiousfreedom.org

Mr. Weinstein,

I have been deployed to a combat zone for the last two months and somehow the most disgusted I've felt (besides minor food poisoning last week) is finding out that our alma mater's Director of Education is preaching to cadets about supposed relics. It is (read: it should be) mindblowing that USAFA thought this was appropriate, but the core issue is much more insidious. Dr.

Enger has an obligation as a professor and especially as the Director of Education to uphold the highest standards of a military academy, let alone a university. Instead, even without knowing the exact content of his bizarre Arthurian revelations, it is clear he has made a profound misjudgment in violation of the intellectual honesty and restraint required of someone in his position. At any other institution across the US, people would be demanding his resignation on these principles alone.

What is to be done? Do I write an open letter and form a petition for his resignation?

I was aware of your work as a cadet and I appreciate what you and the MRFF do for the military and USAFA. You can count on my donation from now on.

(MRFF Client's name and rank withheld)

[MRFF editor's note: Dr. Enger is no longer on the USAFA faculty and is retired.]

BACKGROUND:
**MRFF'S LONG-LINE OF OPPOSITION
TO THE FUNDAMENTALIST
CHRISTIAN-BASED HOMOPHOBIC
OPPRESSION BY USAFA**

**1/30/17 - MRFF Secures Legal Victory Over USAFA, Covered
by Associated Press & CS INDY - "AFA
agrees to pay \$25,000 to settle FOIA lawsuit"**

**6/15/16 - MRFF Warned You,
USAF Academy (USAFA)...**

**11/27/13 - MRFF Posts Billboard in Colorado Springs
Blasting "Gay Cure" at U.S. Air Force Academy**

3/18/13 - USAFA Protest Rally in Colorado Springs

**4/24/09 - Air Force Academy Canceled
Controversial Evangelical Speaker**

4/08/08 - USAFA Invites More Controversial Speakers

**3/27/08 - Paid Bigots Including Walid Shoebat Teaching
Religious War at U.S. Air Force Academy**

INCOMING HATE MRFF'S INBOX

"Shroud of Turin"

From: (name withheld)
Subject: Shroud of Turin
Date: April 21, 2019 at 9:06:45 AM MDT
To: Information Weinstein <mikey@militaryreligiousfreedom.org>

You and your seed murdererd our Lord and Savior mikey winestain.
And here you still are trying to murder His burial Shroud of Turin.
Have you and your jews no shame jewboy?
The flames of hell await the fuel of your jew flesh.
(name withheld)

*To see response from MRFF Advisory Board Members
John Compere and Mike Farrell:*

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"Dr. Rolf Enger"

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To: info@militaryreligiousfreedom.org

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thought this was appropriate, but the core issue is much more insidious. Dr. Enger has an obligation as a professor and especially as the Director of Education to uphold the highest standards of a military academy, let alone a university. Instead, even without knowing the exact content of his bizarre Arthurian revelations, it is clear he has made a profound misjudgment in violation of the intellectual honesty and restraint required of someone in his position. At any other institution across the US, people would be demanding his resignation on these principles alone.

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(MRFF Client's name and rank withheld)
USAFA 2012

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"My reply to the Shroud of Turin article"

From: (email withheld)
Subject: My reply to the Shroud of Turin article
Date: April 20, 2019 at 4:16:19 PM MDT
To: "Mikey Weinstein" <mikeyw4444@gmail.com>

Hi Mikey –

I just wanted to let you know I posted a reply today to the Colorado Springs Independent article about the Shroud of Turin issue (4-18-19) but it has not showed up yet. I will keep checking as it may take time and I will let you know. I am active in the New Mexicans for Science and Reason and am co-editor of the March for Science Facebook Page. Keep up the good work!

– Mark Fraser

<https://www.facebook.com/marchforscienceABQ/>

With all due respect to the historical figure of Jesus, the Shroud of Turin is not an image of anyone from the 1st century. There are numerous facts from the analyses that prove this, but the one that most non-scientists like to question is the accuracy of the radioactive carbon-dating results. (I have an M.S. in Physics with over three decades of research experience in the defense/aerospace community, and I have taught numerous Astronomy courses.)

In 1998, Cardinal Anastasio Ballestrero allowed a small section to be tested for radiocarbon dating by several labs. He announced the results that the shroud was dated from the Middle Ages. These results were published in Nature (1989):

Arizona: 646 ± 31 years

Oxford: 750 ± 30 years

Zürich: 676 ± 24 years old

“The results of radiocarbon measurements at Arizona, Oxford and Zurich yield a calibrated calendar age range with at least 95% confidence for the linen of the Shroud of Turin of AD 1260 – 1390. These results therefore provide conclusive evidence that the linen of the Shroud of Turin is mediaeval.”

<https://www.shroud.com/nature.htm>

Since then there have been several attempts to discount the radiocarbon dating result by claiming that the sample was from a mediaeval repair fragment rather than the image-bearing cloth. These claims have been scientifically refuted:

“A Skeptical Response to Studies on the Radiocarbon Sample from the Shroud of Turin”, *Thermochimica Acta* (2005)

<http://lanoestacado.org/freeinquiry/skeptic/shroud/articles/rogers-ta-response.htm>

“Investigating a Dated piece of the Shroud of Turin”, *Radiocarbon* (2010)

[http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?](http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.692.3190&rep=rep1&type=pdf)

[doi=10.1.1.692.3190&rep=rep1&type=pdf](http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.692.3190&rep=rep1&type=pdf)

“Dating the Turin Shroud: An Assessment”. *Radiocarbon* (1990)

<https://journals.uair.arizona.edu/index.php/radiocarbon/article/viewFile/1254/1259>

Then there are those who claim that the shroud “has unexplainable characteristics that cannot be reproduced by human means”. But in 2009 a professor of organic chemistry reproduced the image using materials and techniques that were available in the Middle Ages.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8291948.stm>

In my classes I use climate deniers as teaching moments to demonstrate classic fallacies of logic. In this case proponents of the authenticity of the Shroud rely on “cherry-picking” to try to prove their belief.

https://rationalwiki.org/wiki/Cherry_picking

I am surprised that a government educational institution (USAFA) would appear to be promoting a particular religion, in violation of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...”.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Establishment_Clause

I am so glad that we have people like Mikey Weinstein (Military Religious Freedom Foundation), who expose any evangelical and fundamentalist proselytizing in the military. I support anyone who is truly American and who supports the principles that the United States was founded on.

– Mark Fraser

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MRFF Information/Contact:
(505) 250-7727

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our Fight in the Courts and in the Media

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