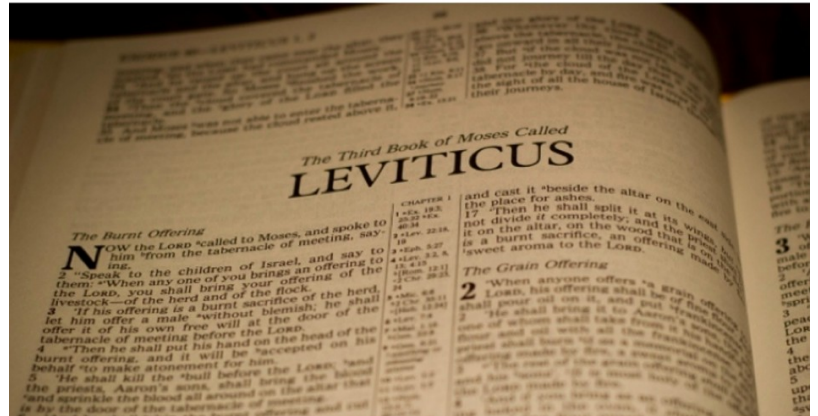




Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on November 9, 2013

## Texas Student Suspended After Ripping up Bible at School

A high school student in Texas is threatening to sue his community's school district after he was suspended for ripping up a Bible in one of his classes. Isaiah Smith, a senior at Birdville High School in the Fort Worth suburb of North Richland Hills, Texas, was suspended after he brought a Bible to his first-hour Spanish class and ripped pages out of the book of Leviticus in front of fellow students whom he accused of teasing him over his supposed homosexuality.



The 18-year-old Smith said he took his Bible to school on October 29 because he claimed he had been harassed by other students in the Spanish class over his sexual orientation. He said that when students told him he was going to hell, he tore pages out of the Book of Leviticus, because, he explained, it was the book of the Bible often quoted in condemnation of homosexuality.

"At my high school, some kids like to say that being gay is a sin and that you can't be gay and Christian," Smith told the [Fort Worth Star-Telegram](#). "I wanted to bring my Bible to school and interpret the books of Leviticus and Romans, because they are often used to bully gay people."

Smith received a three-day suspension for his behavior, but not, a spokesman for the school district insisted, for ripping out the pages of the Bible. Birdsville School District spokesman Mark Thomas told the *Star-Telegram* that while he couldn't speak specifically about what happened, any student who disrupts the learning environment in the school district faces discipline in keeping with the district's Student Code of Conduct. The *Star-Telegram* said Thomas insisted that "Smith's suspension had nothing to do with the passages in the Bible, but with the student's behavior."

Thomas added that the district is also investigating Smith's claims that he was "bullied" over his supposed homosexuality. "I can assure you that the district investigates and addresses all reports of bullying that it receives," Thomas said.

According to Smith, he carried his ripped Bible around school the rest of the day without incident, but the following day was called to the office of the school's vice principal, Glenn Serviente, where he was reprimanded. "Smith said the assistant principal asked him how Muslims would feel if someone ripped the Quran," reported the *Star-Telegram*. "Smith responded they would not like it but that he tore up his own Bible, not something belonging to someone else."

Isaiah said that Serviente then confiscated his Bible and handed him a discipline slip explaining that he was being suspended for "distraction and disruption in class by tearing up Bible in class."

The American Humanist Association (AHA) quickly stepped in with an offer to represent Smith for free in his attempt to force the school district to remove the suspension from his school record. "Isaiah's Bible was not the source of disruption, the bullying was," insisted the organization's attorney Bill Burgess. "Instead of reprimanding the bullies, the school punished Isaiah for offering an alternative viewpoint on the Bible."

The AHA's Monica Miller added that the district's actions were "a clear violation of Isaiah's First



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Amendment rights. The only explanation for this kind of punishment is that it was religiously motivated, because he expressed different beliefs on the Bible than those held by school officials. There's no legal basis for that kind of reaction."

According to the [Christian Post](#), "Smith has told local media outlets that he identifies as a Christian but does not believe the bible condemns homosexuality. He has previously appeared before the City Council regarding anti-discrimination laws and has protested saying the Pledge of Allegiance at his school because he believes it is a violation of the separation of Church and State."



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