

## Blood Cries to God!

by Gary Simpson

The ancient Biblical story relates how Cain, the farmer, killed his brother, Abel, the sheep herder. And then Cain tries to act like nothing happened. When questioned by God, about where Abel is, Cain replies that he is not his "brother's keeper." And then we hear the powerful line from God.

**Genesis 4:10** (NIV) The Lord, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries to me from the ground."

This was not just any murder. The murder is unique for two reasons; it is the first murder recorded in the Bible and it is the first murder over religion. Cain was angry, because God liked Abel's offering more than God liked Cain's offering. Abel's murder shows religion gone bad, religion gone toxic.

A man goes to Pulse, a gay club in Orlando, Florida and starts shooting people. As a result of his homophobic shooting spree, 49 people are dead, over 50 people are injured, thousands mourn and thousands are terrorized. June is Pride month in many communities. Never would I dream that I would be discussing a hate crime, of this magnitude, targeting the LGBT community during Pride.

The murders in Orlando did not take place in a vacuum. The larger societal climate helped create an environment where shooting people at a gay bar made sense to the murderer. We cannot write off the Orlando shooting as an isolated incident of violence against queer and Trans people. Sexual minority students are more likely to be the target of physical bullying in school. Gay bashings are much more common than anybody in the LGBT community really wants to think about. And as I think of the Orlando shooting, Genesis 4:10 keeps running through my mind. "What have you done? . . . blood cries to me from the ground."

The blood of Orlando cries out.

- Parents disown their children and kick them out of their homes, just for the supposed crime of being gay, lesbian, bisexual, asexual or Trans. And the Lord asks, "What have you done? . . . blood cries to me from the ground."
- Sexual minority youth make up a disproportionately high percentage of homeless youth. And the Lord asks, "What have you done? . . . blood cries to me from the ground."
- The word fag is a commonly heard insult in the schools of our land and the word gay is frequently used as a term of disapproval. And the Lord asks, "What have you done? . . . blood cries to me from the ground."
- Churches vilify and excommunicate LGBT congregants. And the Lord asks, "What have you done? . . . blood cries to me from the ground."
- The United States military, until relatively recently, fired people when the military learned that they were gay or lesbian. And the Lord asks, "What have you done? . . . blood cries to me from the ground."
- Some people of faith rally against protecting queer people from discrimination in the workplace and from protection in hate crimes legislation. And the Lord asks, "What have you done? . . . blood cries to me from the ground."
- Some people of faith lobby for the ability to refuse to serve queer people in their businesses, lobby for the ability to refuse to provide LGBT people medical treatment and lobby for the ability to refuse to provide sexual minority people any counselling and psychotherapy. And the Lord asks, "What have you done? . . . blood cries to me from the ground."

- Some people oppose Gay Straight Alliances in schools. And the Lord asks, "What have you done? . . . blood cries to me from the ground."
- Bills are introduced in legislative assemblies that restrict the access of Trans people to bathrooms, painting Trans people as dangerous to children. And the Lord asks, "What have you done? . . . blood cries to me from the ground."
- Some religious leaders say they are praying for Orlando, without mentioning that they are praying for queer people, their loved ones and their allies. And the Lord asks, "What have you done? . . . blood cries to me from the ground."
- In some countries loving a person of the same gender can result in a prison sentence or in execution. There are regions of the world where executions of gay people are public and are intended to instill terror. And the Lord asks, "What have you done? . . . blood cries to me from the ground."
- The Lord looks at a systemically homophobic and transphobic society. And the Lord asks, "What have you done? The blood of those in whom I take pleasure cries to me from the ground."

The cry of Orlando blood calls on us, individually, and as family, school, religious, corporate and political groups to search our hearts, to find and to root out homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. So we can ensure our communities are safe for queer and Trans people.

The fact that God hears the cry of the blood of those murdered due to religious hatred speaks volumes. God is with those oppressed by religious hate and God values those who experience religious hate.