



UnClobber: Rethinking Our Misuse of the Bible on Homosexuality

Colby Martin

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Churches in America are experiencing an unprecedented fracturing due to their belief and attitude toward the LGBTQ community. Armed with only six passages in the Bible--often known as the "clobber passages"--the traditional Christian position has been one that stands against the full inclusion of our LGBTQ brothers and sisters. *UnClobber* reexamines each of those frequently quoted passages of Scripture, alternating with author Colby Martin's own story of being fired from an evangelical megachurch when they discovered his stance on sexuality.

UnClobber reexamines what the Bible says (and does not say) about homosexuality in such a way that breathes fresh life into outdated and inaccurate assumptions and interpretations.

UnClobber: Rethinking Our Misuse of the Bible on Homosexuality Details

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Colby Martin

From Reader Review UnClobber: Rethinking Our Misuse of the Bible on Homosexuality for online ebook

Pamela says

I received a copy of this book from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review. I am not basing this review on my opinion or my beliefs.

The author takes great liberty in attempting to prove his argument. While I appreciated his research into the original language, semantics, translation, and culture, I felt he stretched his conclusions, or projected his conclusions. Research can be tweaked to "fit" one's bias. His argument is unconvincing.

I also found the structure to be disconcerting. The author kept stating that an issue would be addressed "later" or in "another chapter". This became frustrating as I thought an issue would be addressed, but then it abruptly was put on hold.

Finally, and most importantly, while the author uses scripture to "prove" his opinion, he fails to address the basic NATURE OF THE UNIVERSE. In the natural order, homosexuality insures the depletion of a species, as no procreation is possible. It would go against everything in the survival of the fittest principle. Therefore, in the sense that extinction is counterproductive, then homosexuality is unnatural. That is not to say, homosexuals should be rejected or hated. Nowhere in scripture is that stated.

Trevor Winsor says

Colby Martin works to make a "biblical" argument for affirming same-sex attraction and relationships. On all things bible-related I disagree with Colby on all fronts. Colby does two things in this book: 1. Tells his story of "aligning his heart with his head" when it comes to the biblical stance on homosexuality. 2.

"Unclobber" or debunk the "conservative" stance on the 6 passages on the topic of homosexuality.

As well-intentioned as he is, Colby takes way too many liberties with the Bible and stretches the language to fit his argument. I believe his interpretation of scripture is based on what he wants it to be, rather than on what it says.

I couldn't in good conscience recommend this book to anyone. I appreciate Colby and his desire to be including, but think he has completely missed the mark.

Mona AlvaradoFrazier says

This book is part memoir and part biblical interpretation of the "Clobber" scriptures. Pastor Martin told his Conservative Evangelical church that while he agreed with the denomination on the issue of homosexuality, he struggled with his church's policies on homosexuals, sin, and involvement in the church. His questioning led to his dismissal. In his opinion, these six scriptures are used to "clobber" someone and 'win' the 'homosexuality as sin' debate. He believes these verses were misinterpreted, mistranslated from Hebrew or Greek, and misapplied.

Every other chapter takes a scripture and dissects the language. While he doesn't claim to have the right

answer, or interpretation, the cloudiness of the verses opens up the discussion about whether a God who says and demonstrated love would say homosexuals should be excluded from the church or are 'an abomination.'

Whether you agree with the interpretations of the six scriptures or not isn't as much the issue, as is the opening of the dialogue on the church's stance towards the LGBTQ community. It is interesting to read the pastor's viewpoint and see how he points out his examples of misinterpretations.

The bottom line of this book is that the pastor believes "homosexuality as an orientation" isn't condemned, but what the bible condemns is rape, sexual molestation, orgies, prostitution, sex slavery, and exploiting people for sex.

This book adds to the conversation and gives information for further discussion. People will make up their own mind and it's important to add to the dialogue. I received an ARC of the book from NetGalley. The review is my honest opinion.

Steen Jones says

This read raised many questions for me. I understand the author's points and think many are valid, some more than others.

I'm still not sure how I feel "post-Unclobbering," but either way, I'm glad that I read it and would recommend to people who feel unsure about this subject and curious to hear different POV's.

Brianna Silva says

The best part of this book is the memoir half, where the author shares his own story about coming out as a straight affirming pastor in a conservative church, and the resulting affects on his life. It's a stirring story about finding the courage to stand up for what you believe, for following Christ even when he leads you somewhere scary - and the life that comes on the other side of obedience.

The other half of this book - the theology unpacking what the Bible "really" says on homosexuality - serves as a good starting point on the topic, but definitely wasn't thorough or in-depth. I learned a good deal from it, but still felt I needed to do more research afterwards. Fortunately, I had a list of books on both sides of the debate that I was still planning to read, so this wasn't a problem for me.

I wouldn't recommend this for someone who is staunchly against the idea of same-sex relationships in the church, because the brief arguments may leave them unsatisfied and unconvinced.

However, for someone who is already sympathetic to the cause of gay rights and wants to align their head and heart ("I want to accept them, but doesn't the Bible say...?"), this can be a great starting point for understanding the true cultural and historical context of Scriptures that have been traditionally used to "clobber" people with same-sex attractions.

In short, what "the Bible says" is more relevant than ever... but how we've been interpreting it and translating

it to our modern culture may not only be entirely off, but egregiously and horrifically wrong.

Perhaps most important is this book's open call for these privately-affirming Christians to bravely step out of the closet, to courageously love as Jesus loved, to accept our queer brothers and sisters with open arms. They need us. They've suffered enough abuse at the hands of the church.

It's time for the church to be what it was always meant to be: a place of healing, salvation, and affirmation for all people... male and female, Jew and Gentile, straight and gay.

Caidyn (SEMI-HIATUS; BW Reviews; he/him/his) says

3.5

In the name of honesty, besides getting this from Netgalley, I'm a part of the LGBT+ community. However, I'm not a Christian.* Raised in a very New Age offshoot of Christianity and I absolutely love Jesus, but I don't accept him as my savior. Nor do I think that I need saving. But, that's another conversation for another time. Aka, not in this review for this book. Anyways...

The main reason why I requested this book is because I think it sounded so important. Of course I've heard the Clobber text, even if I completely disagree with it on multiple levels. Everyone has heard it and most of the LGBT+ community think it's complete bunk, just like Colby Martin does. It's just nice to have a theologian honestly going through the text in a logical way to disprove what it means, taking into account historical context and the translation itself.

Will this convince everyone? No. But will does it cause some doubt to shadow a person's thoughts, especially if they're already sympathetic to the cause? Yes.

*I also only read the stuff about the text. While I think it's valid for people who need to read that story, the whole coming out as an ally struggle doesn't interest me.

Lisa says

I won this book on the Goodreads Giveaway, and I preordered it on my Kindle because I wanted an electronic version in my library. I could not put this book down. I laughed, cried, and experienced feelings of anger.

This is not your grandma's "religious studies" book. Unclobber is a memoir supported by academic discussion. Colby brilliantly juxtaposes his personal journey (and that of his wife and family) in an every other chapter format, followed by theological discussion of the verses often used to exclude populations of people from church, and more importantly, God's love and acceptance.

I laughed because Colby's writing is hysterically funny, mixing humor with sharp wit. I cried because of the treatment of his family in a traditionally conservative church environment and his lack of malice towards those in authority. I felt angry that as a life long Christian that this was the first time anyone explained the verses to me that I had read and heard peripherally preached numerous times. And following Colby's

example, I don't blame anyone. I am just glad I'm trying to figure it all out now.

This book...this story is compelling...a must read....not because Colby's analysis provides every answer. And he even admits what he doesn't know. No, this book is critically important because it makes you think and perhaps reexamine the debate, not from a position of fearful exclusion, but from a place of pure love.

Katie says

(I received a copy of this book through the publisher and Netgalley in exchange for an honest review)

Actually 3.5 stars

This one is a bit tough for me to review as, to be entirely honest, I don't typically read (much less review) non-fiction. I'm much more of a "skimmer" when it comes to non-fiction, but this one certainly warranted a full read. For the sake of organizing my thoughts, I'll start this review with what Martin does with Unclobber, then move on to what I felt were weak spots for this book and finally end with what I thought this book did well.

I would describe Unclobber as 80-85% memoir. While Martin does (eventually) examine the six so-called "clobber" verses, the vast majority of this book is his personal story of becoming a pastor and eventually breaking with the conservative Christian church when it comes to LGBT issues. The six verses in question that he discusses are: Genesis 19, Leviticus 18 and 20, Romans 1, 1 Corinthians 6, and 1 Timothy 1.

My biggest complaint about Unclobber is that, in title and description, it purports to be primarily a discussion of the six "clobber passages" and what they do (or, in Martin's analysis, *do not say*) about homosexuality. In reality, as I said, the majority of the book is made up of a bare-bones description of Martin's personal journey. In his opening, Martin says that discussion of the verses can be found in the even numbered chapters, but I found even those were largely discussions of his own personal journey. While this isn't necessarily a bad thing, it isn't exactly what I signed up for when jumping into this book. My main concern with the focus on memoir is that, as I said, Martin gives it a very "bare-bones" approach. His telling of his own story is very "play-by-play" and fact based, almost entirely flying by his emotional and spiritual journey. I more often than not found myself wondering "*but why?*" So many times he describes being "concerned" or "questioning," but never really delves into *why* he felt that way and zooms past any soul searching or research he did along the way to skip straight into the end result (getting fired, losing friends, etc). If the intent was to mix the unpacking of the "clobber verses" into his personal journey, I would say the narrative largely failed in that regard. I strongly feel Martin should have either left out the personal side entirely in favor of a more in-depth analysis of the verses in question OR gone to a much deeper level emotionally in his narrative and taken us along on his journey as he came across each verse and struggled with it. As it is, the personal story seems rather surface level and disjointed (Martin is constantly skipping around in his story seemingly on a whim) and the verses tossed in almost at random.

Now, on to why I decided to give Unclobber 3.5 stars. When Martin does finally get around to the verses, he does an amazing job with them. While he certainly could have gone much more in depth in his analysis, for each verse in question he provides a summary of the passage that contains the verse, historical background on what was happening in the Jewish community when the passage was written, and breaks down the actual language of the verse itself to, piece by piece, take apart the traditional interpretations. The combination of historical summary with investigation into the actual language used was, frankly, groundbreaking at times.

Even those completely closed off to the idea of the Bible not condemning the LGBTQ community would be negligent to not concede that Martin's analysis of the original language used warrants further discussion and certainly leaves the door wide open to a more welcoming stance on homosexuality. Something that I found quite interesting, however, were two tiny tidbits that Martin tosses in (one at the very beginning of *Unclobber* and one at the very end). First, that “there are approximately six verses (out of 31,000) in Scripture that appear to reference same-sex sex acts” and second – in his discussion of Paul's treatment of the “issue” - “.. if Paul's ultimate intent ... was to make a blanket condemnation of men who were not attracted to women, he actually had the language to do so!” Essentially: “Six verses out of 31,000 even remotely reference the idea, and at a time in history when terms like “homosexual” were nonexistent, the language that was available at the time isn't even used!” If I were Martin, I would have repeated that nonstop to really drive that point home! Despite missing his opportunity for that final home-run at the end of his discussion, what he does with the verses is great and I'd highly recommend *Unclobber* if for no other reason than to skip right to his analysis.

In short: minus 1.5 stars for too much choppy, surface level memoir but 3.5 stars for groundbreaking unpacking of six difficult verses. Recommended to anyone even remotely open to the idea of the church welcoming the LGBTQ community.

Ben says

I received a preview copy of Colby Martin's new book *UnClobber: Rethinking Our Misuse of the Bible on Homosexuality* (Westminster Knox Press: Sept 28, 2016) and was asked to write an honest review. *UnClobber* is really two books in one: First it is an attempt to dissuade people that The Bible does not condemn homosexuality and there are logically sound and biblically grounded reasons for this position; second, it is the story of Martin's journey over the last two decades arriving at a new understanding of The Bible, the teachings of Jesus, and losing/finding/creating a fellowship community. Just as the book is divided into two parts, so too shall this review be divided in twain. Similarly, taking a page from Martin's book, this review weaves a little of my own biography throughout.

I grew up gay in a town where many of my peers were becoming “born again.” As a result, my earliest steps in the coming out process involved a lot of research to dissuade my peers that homosexuality is wrong. Martin's discussion of biblical verses here (the so called “Clobber Passages”) was not new to me. Martin's voice adds a degree of levity to this discussion as he uses approachable language and parables showing how the passages are either mistranslated or misunderstood. Martin embodies a version of Inigo Montoya from *The Princess Bride* saying to his readers, “You keep using that word, I do not think it means what you think it means.” Thus, Martin is successful in engaging the reader with the text and its origins.

If this is your first time looking at these passages, Martin offers a safe starting point with approachable language and useful examples to help you put these passages in a new context. As a gay man, I am predisposed to agree with Martin, but even still there are a few places in this work where I was forced to fill in gaps in Martin's logic. *UnClobber* is a good primer to prepare new readers to seek other authors who have used more academic rigor to discuss these passages. Martin does include a list of some additional sources those who may wish to learn more can pursue in further unpacking these passages. However, on its own, *UnClobber* is not comprehensive enough to convince those who are predisposed to disagree with Martin.

The second element of Martin's book is that of his biography. I have been an acquaintance of Martin's since we attended the same junior high. Early in *UnClobber*, Martin offers apologies to all those who knew him

when he first became “oversaved.” His awakening into Evangelical Christianity coincided with my journey coming out of the closet. Though he and I had never been close, we ran in similar crowds and our opinions in regards to homosexuality were known to each other—needless to say, at the time they were not in alignment. UnClobber chronicles Martin’s journey from oversaved youth to affirming Christian. The book details his conflict with conservative Christianity and his attempts to bring his life into alignment. The search for honesty and integrity to the self and others is a key focus in his journey. Martin’s journey of exclusion from the fellowship of his congregations is one that many gay Christians might find parallels to in their own lives. His story is woven throughout his attempts to UnClobber the Clobber passages and speaks to a form of Christianity that is more about helping and loving neighbors than condemnation of our fellow humans. The alignment of head and heart and faith that Martin lays out may speak to many Evangelicals who have begun to question the teachings of their churches.

The two stories Martin tells in UnClobber are written accessibly and may offer insights to others who have started to take the same journey. This move is important and I hope more Evangelicals can move towards the same positions as Martin. I am worried that much of the impetus for this change of heart comes from a position that the Bible has merely been misunderstood. I would challenge Martin and all Christians to ask themselves what it might mean for them even if the Bible wasn’t misunderstood and still offered six passages that condemned homosexuality. Would their head and heart still be in misalignment? What would it mean for them to hold viewpoints that are contrary to these passages? My hope is that they would be Christ-like and welcome the outcasts into their flocks and treat them only with love and kindness. While finding that the Bible “does not mean what you think it means” may offer comfort once one realizes this, there are greater concerns here than simply justifying the position that LGBTQ people deserve love and respect because it isn’t forbidden by whichever translation of the Bible one happens to own. My hope is that Martin’s newfound alignment and fellowship community would find that being Christ-like sometimes means even questioning the disciples and doing that which is right to their fellow humans.

On a final note, Martin begins his book with a series of people for whom it might be written; unfortunately, I do not fall in those audiences. I was raised Lutheran (ELCA) and attended an Episcopalian college, so many of the components of Evangelical Christianity were unfamiliar to my more liturgical background. My churches also had (and continue to have) many of the debates decades ago that Martin is discussing here. Martin also co-opts much of the language around coming out and gay identity in ways that made me uneasy as a gay man. I imagine this was a rhetorical device and meant to show that his life has also shared some of the same struggles with the church as the LGBTQ community, but the two experiences, though similar, are vastly different. His easy adoption of these terms and experiences erases a long history of struggle for the LGBTQ community. That said, Martin’s unfortunate story of broken fellowship is compelling and may resonate with many readers who attempt to become more open and affirming or reconcile their sexuality with Christianity. UnClobber is a wonderful starting point in realigning faith, community, and LGBTQ peoples grounded in the experience of one sojourner. I suspect if the mission of his church continues as it has, the world will be a better place for it, and this book will be one small part of that change.

Lisa says

This book might just be what every single person gets from me for Christmas this year. (Oh joy, they're all thinking!) . For about 5 years now, I've argued -- very privately at first and then more and more vocally -- that the Bible doesn't really speak to homosexuality as we know it today. Christians are always shocked at my saying so. At first unprepared for the ensuing argument, I started to do research. Turns out there are really only 6 verses in the Bible that Christians can use in their arguments against homosexuality. I've found

arguments against each one of them that resonate with me. Most of the time, Christians don't even KNOW what verse they're referring to; they just FEEL it's wrong. Those who DO know the Scripture and can argue with me, however, have been able to tear my resources apart based on the motivations of those that have come up with the arguments -- they're just looking for justifications for what they already believe. That's one of the reasons I really like Colby Martin's book. He's not gay. He didn't come into this platform because he loved someone gay or he wanted to make sure that he protected someone gay. He just loves Jesus and the Bible. And excluding and shaming the LGBTQ community felt wrong to him. And it feels wrong to me. So he started to really examine these 6 verses, based on real Biblical hermeneutics. And he finds legitimate arguments for each of the 6 verses that argue that sexual immorality is wrong. But homosexuality and homosexual sex -- of the loving, committed, long-term variety we see today -- isn't spoken of or condemned in Scripture. I love this book. It allows me to not be self righteous or condemning in the name of Jesus. Whew. Because doesn't that seem wrong??? Don't you want that too? Read the book. I beg you. Be set free.

Mark says

UnClobber is two interrelated works found inside one volume. The first is the story of Colby Martin, the author -- the story of how he began within conservative evangelicalism, but through study of scripture, has become an LGBTQ affirming, progressive Christian pastor. The second is the exegetical and theological details that provide alternate (and arguably better and closer to correct) ways of looking at the traditional "clobber" passages used to condemn homosexuality, homosexuals, all who are non-heterosexual, and any who take an affirming position.

Martin's change is in the minority because it was caused by a theological cognitive dissonance, as opposed to the more typical fashion in which a person knows a family member or friend who is LGBTQ. I think this is one of the strengths of this book: it shows that LGBTQ affirmation in the Christian church can be derived solely from scripture and theology. Whereas it might be possible to dismiss someone making a change due to close relationship factors as being "emotional" or "subjective," this charge is much more difficult to make when the person making the change has no obvious vested advantage, and even more, heavy personal loss due to the change.

The exegetical and theological chapters that deal specifically with the traditional "clobber" passages are well written, and easy to read and understand. The key point Martin attempts to make with each of these passages is not that they are pro-LGBTQ (importantly because such a concept did not exist when the texts were written), but that in their cultural and exegetical contexts, none of them are qualified to address the modern understandings of non-heterosexual gender identities.

I think a weakness is that this book tries to cover two different grounds, even though they are closely interrelated. It may be because I found it disconcerting to find that the chapters are laid out so that story and theology alternate. And perhaps because of the limited length of the book, it tries to cover too much ground. I think the personal story was adequate, but it felt like I was only getting a small taste of a much more detailed exegesis that was available. Fortunately there are plenty of endnotes and further readings given.

Reading as someone who has already seen these exegesis and theological perspectives, I didn't find anything revolutionary. What I appreciated was that some of the more difficult concepts found in commentaries and more scholarly works were given in easier-to-digest language. I don't mean they were "dumbed down" but that Martin has a way of writing that allows complicated concepts to become more clear.

One of the key concepts that Martin introduced at the beginning which really struck a note with me was the concept of "integrity." Integrity is often understood to be more or less synonymous with honesty. This isn't incorrect but Martin shows his readers how deficient this understanding is. He describes a much broader definition of integrity in which our internal thoughts and external words and actions are "integrated." He describes how his journey began because he wasn't living an "integrated" life -- he was beginning to think one thing about LGBTQ issues, but he was saying and living something different. He thinks many Christians are in the same boat as he was. The journey of becoming more integrated and having true integrity may involve much discomfort and personal loss, but he wants his readers to know that is what all of us need to work towards. **For me, the concept of living a life of genuine integrity was the most profound message of this book.**

This book can clearly benefit anyone who has questions about what the Bible has to say about LGBTQ relationships and are open to broader hermeneutics than what is commonly found in most conservative evangelicalism. This book can also be of help to those who might already be open and/or affirming but would like a better understanding of the so-called "clobber" passages. But I think the most valuable benefit would be if those who do believe the Bible teaches that homosexuality is a sin reads this book, and comes to at least an understanding that Christians who take the Bible seriously and respectfully can arrive at very different conclusions.

Patty says

"UnClobber is my attempt to say, in one word, that I do not believe that God stands opposed to those who are attracted to the same sex, or that God withholds divine blessing from a same-sex relationship. UnClobber came out of my desire to reverse the damage of the so-called 'Clobber Passages.'"

I am not Martin's chosen audience for his book. I was convinced a long time ago that G!d loves all people. If G!d's grace and love are true, then the people who read the Bible as condemning gay and lesbian people are absolutely wrong. So Martin did not write his book for me. I did not need persuading.

That said, I am glad that I took the time to read through Martin's Biblical commentary. What he has to say makes a lot of sense to me and I hope that others will see his explanations as useful.

I also was glad to read Martin's own story. Although it was sometimes hard to track two stories at once, I can understand why Martin wrote his book as he did. It is important to see what he went through to get to affirming G!d's love for everyone.

If you are having any doubts at all about your faith condemning others to a world where G!d hates them, please read through this book. Open your eyes and your mind to the possibility that G!d really does love all people.

Gabrielle Prose says

I read this book because I was curious about what kind of argument he would present to support the idea that living a homosexual lifestyle is not a sin.

I disagree with his position on all of his 'clobber' passages. His use of context to dismiss the literal

interpretation of the text left me more convinced that his interpretation was incorrect.

His scriptural references were dissected with clarity, but then he made HUGE leaps. He even goes so far as to say, 'what if he didn't mean what it actually says? What else could it mean?' I don't disagree with his further breakdown of how exploitation, idolatry & prostitution are not in the Lord's design for his people. But, his leap to exclude homosexuals from the list falls far from 'proven' in my opinion.

I only agree with his assertions that Christians should not discriminate against anyone, and we as a group need to love all our neighbors, regardless.

Lastly, his new church founded upon inclusivity seems a dangerous place theologically. He suggests that any faith would also be welcome? What happened to 'no one comes to the Father except through me'? Maybe he's 'unclobbered' this passage as well? It only reinforces my conclusions that his 'exceptions' for each passage that very clearly state homosexuality is not in God's design are wrong.

I would not recommend this book as I highly disagree with the theology presented. It borders on heresy.

I received an advanced reader copy of this book in exchange for my honest review.

Jocelyn Taylor says

Great examination of the "Clobber" verses- those verses often used to condemn homosexuality. This is a great place to start if you're questioning the interpretation that practicing homosexuality is a sin.

Ann Plazek says

6 verses among 31,000 in the Bible seem to address homosexuality, or do they? Pastor Colby Martin looks at those six verses that have been used to discriminate against millions of people and label them as sinners.

By looking at each of the verses in a broader historical context rather than a simple reading of those verses in isolation may show that they have been misinterpreted and or mistranslated for years.

If you are willing to follow this former conservative, now progressive Pastor through his simple to follow and well thought out arguments in favor of reading these verses through a wider historical context you may just be surprised what is revealed if you are open to a different interpretation.

I considered attempting to provide a brief summary of his findings regarding each of the 6 verses, but to do so would be unfair. As Colby says, "It's going to take a lot of words, but I think the task is important and much needed. Hence the thousands of words I'm offering in this book to try and get us to rethink a couple dozen words from the Bible... Great effort will be required to unpack the Greek, explore the context, and appeal to information and considerations outside the biblical text."

This is the perfect book for anyone who has struggled to align their personal relationships with family

members or those they may know in the LGBTQ community or perhaps are themselves struggling with their sexual identity with what the traditional conservative Christian church has condemned as a sin for centuries.
