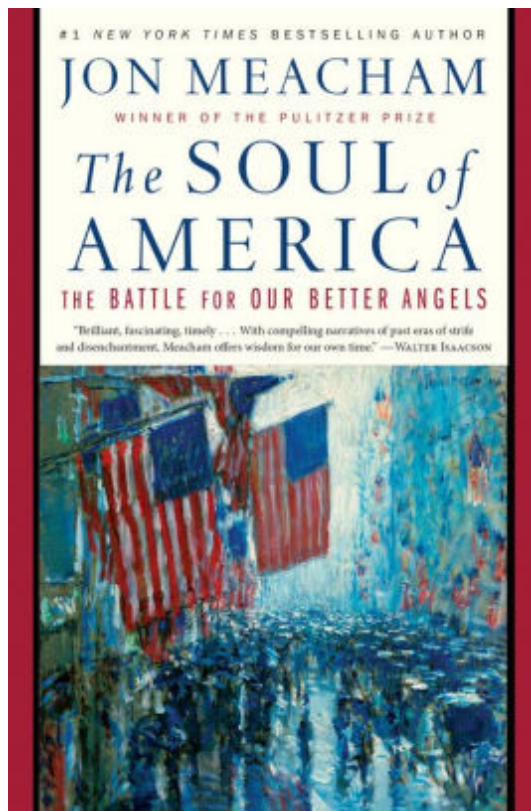




THE SOUL OF AMERICA: The Battle for Our Better Angels

Author: Jon Meacham

Publisher: Random House, 416 pp.



The Soul of America is the third book that I have read written by the historian, Jon Meacham. The one before was the biography of George H.W. Bush. I am always impressed by the depth of Meacham's research and appreciate the clarity and in his writing. The Soul of America didn't disappoint me in that regards.

According to Meacham, we are living under political fear in a broken political system. However, Meacham chronicles the history to convince us that this is nothing new. The politics of fear had been prevalent many times before and we always survived them as a nation. This is because of the greatness of America's soul and that is the message of his book.

Though Meacham gives full credit to Lincoln and Martin Luther King, Jr's efforts, unlike many writers who overlook the contribution of President Johnson, Meacham praises LBJ for his efforts in passing the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. He aptly quotes him, "There is no Negro problem. There is no Southern problem. There is no Northern problem. There is only an American problem."

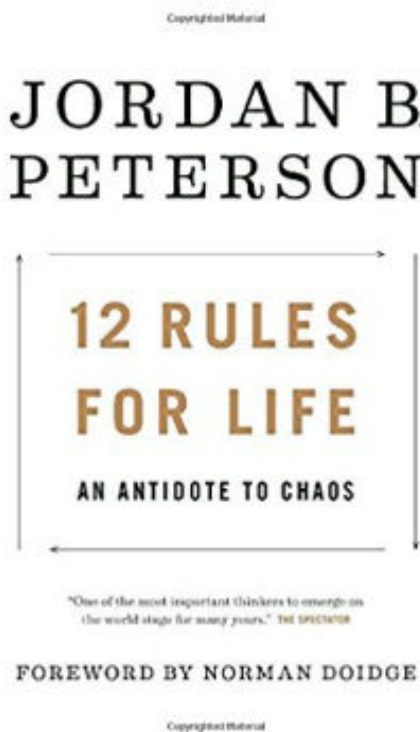
Meacham chronicles other momentous developments: women's suffrage, ignited at Seneca Falls and fueled by Susan B. Anthony ("We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal"); Teddy Roosevelt's "melting pot" view of immigration; the rise and fall of populists Huey Long and Eugene McCarthy; Franklin D. Roosevelt's contribution to the nation — "a spirit of optimism forged in his

own experience.” Time and again, Meacham mentions Trump as a counterpoint — a figure, because his presidency “has more in common with reality television or professional wrestling,” who stands in stark contrast to “past presidents [who] have unified and inspired with conscious dignity and conscientious efficiency.”

12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos

Author: Jordan B. Peterson

Publisher: Penguin Random House, 480 p.



not been told before. His maxims can be summed as: “Pursue what is meaningful, not merely what is immediately expedient. Stand up straight and face the world with courage and confidence. Get your own life in order before you go out and try to save the world. Treat yourself like a person

Ultimately, Meacham believes the nation will move beyond Trump because, in the end, as they have shown on vital issues before, Americans embrace their better angels. All in all, this is a good read to reacquaint oneself with American struggles for justice and equality.

-Reviewed by Musafir

whom you are responsible for. Tell the truth.”

The very fact that the book is the best seller currently, tells us that we all needed to hear them again as a refresher course in life. Peterson expounds on those 12 rules in twelve different chapters. He weaves nice stories to establish premises before coming to the conclusion. Though an interesting read, many a time his stories do not relate to the conclusions he draws.

I particularly like the first chapter of the book where he compares human neurophysiology to that of the lobster, while making the point that we exist in hierarchies that are at least partly explicable as evolutionary patterns. His advice is then to “stand up straight”, following the example of the body language of dominant lobsters.

In this era when women’s rights and issues are dominant, Peterson draws attention to society shaming males and looking at masculinity only in pathological sense. He speaks against the movement of devaluing fatherhood and other male paternal qualities.

His message can be summarized as realizing personal responsibility, meaning and purpose should be a central part of life’s journey regardless of the outcome.

-Reviewed by Musafir

Jordan Peterson says nothing in his book, “12 Rules for Life” that has