

The Lesser Evil – Political Ethics in an Age of Terror by Michael Ignatieff.
Edinburgh University Press 2004.

The Lesser Evil is based on the Gifford lectures which Michael Ignatieff delivered in January 2003 at the University of Edinburgh, but substantially reworked for publication.

Ignatieff is a rarity among modern thinkers and ethicists for his ability to communicate to a wide audience with lucidity, intellectual clarity and power. All these were to the fore in his 2000 analysis *Virtual War*, focussed on the Balkan conflicts, and they are present to the highest degree in *The Lesser Evil*.

The Six chapters that comprise the book are Democracy and the Lesser Evil, The Ethics of Emergency, The Weakness of the Strong, The Strength of the Weak, The Temptations of Nihilism and Liberty and Armageddon. Each chapter has copious notes with much material for further reading.

Written in the moral and political aftermath of September 11th, and the conflict with Iraq, Ignatieff poses a number of vital questions which focus not only on the challenges that face the world from fundamentalist Islam and so-called rogue states but also how the response to them will affect not only our societies but the world as a whole in the 21st century.

The Lesser Evil is profound and powerful and a book that no thinking person should fail to read.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh