

Ultimate Punishment
A LAWYER'S REFLECTIONS ON DEALING WITH
THE DEATH PENALTY by Scott Turow. Picador 2003.

Scott Turow, established since his first compelling legal novel as the thinking person's John Grisham, has produced a fascinating analysis of the efficacy or otherwise of capital punishment.

Invited in 2000 by the Governor of Illinois to join a commission on the death penalty, Scott Turow participated in an in-depth process that culminated in a recommendation that a thorough over-haul of the capital punishment system was essential. Turow considers this most polarising of subjects from every available angle, providing the reader with one of the best, most succinct and approachable analyses of a major moral and practical issue that could be wished for.

His own involvement in capital cases where miscarriages of justice had already sent the accused to death row, as well as his years of general legal experience provide Turow with the necessary background to present the complexities of the argument to the lay reader, and I doubt whether a better summary of the arguments could be found anywhere.

In the end, Scott Turow came to a decision about whether to support or oppose the death penalty. You will need to read this short book to find out what it was and appreciate why he reached it.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh