

# *The Penitentes According to The Rev. and Mrs. Thomas Harwood*

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THE Penitentes (also known as Los Hermanos, the Brothers) are a mysterious, secret brotherhood of Spanish-Americans found in diminishing numbers in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado. They are professedly Roman Catholics, but their peculiar Lenten rites differ considerably from those normally associated with this denomination. Their precise origin is somewhat uncertain. According to some authorities, both Catholic and otherwise, they are an irregular, even degenerate off-shoot of the Third Order of the Franciscans. This Third Order was composed of persons who desired to follow the Franciscan way of life while residing in their own homes and pursuing their accustomed secular occupations. The Penitente Brothers, likewise, lived with their families and followed their customary occupations. The fact that the Third Order was also called the Order of Penance gives further support for the identification that has been suggested. However, quite recently Fray Angelico Chavez has rejected this identification; instead, he gives convincing reasons for believing that the Penitentes (who practice flagellation) are a transplant, with some modifications, of certain penitential flagellant societies that existed in Spain, especially in Seville. In any event, they made their appearance in New Mexico around the years 1790-1800; by 1850 they had penetrated many hamlets and towns. They were opposed, at times condemned, by the religious authorities, two of whom, Bishop Lamy and Bishop Salpointe, supposing that they were a deviation of the Third Or-

der, urged them to reform and to return to this branch of the Franciscans.<sup>1</sup>

Whatever their origin may have been, it is well known that they do practice flagellation unto blood in connection with penitence for their sons during the Lenten period, both in secret meetings and in public processions. On Good Friday there are highly secret meetings in a morada (chapel); also, one or more of the group may carry a heavy cross in a public procession, or might even be bound to a cross to simulate the crucifixion. According to some apparently authentic accounts some flagellants have died as a result of their ordeals. Other rites, including flagellation, are conducted quite secretly in a morada (chapel) culminating in a secret Good Friday observance. Quite a number of outsiders have witnessed the public processions; a few have written reports about them; and still fewer have published photographs which they have taken at some risk. For outsiders are strictly warned to keep their distance. Bach states that Charles Lummis was shot in the neck while attempting to take a picture of a Penitente crucifixion, and more than one photographer has had his camera broken. Very few outsiders, however, have been privileged to witness the secret morada rites, and I know of but one person who had published what he had witnessed. For any unauthorized person who might attempt to enter the morada on such an occasion might be subjected to bodily harm. Bach states that the guards of a morada were armed. He himself had hoped to witness the secret

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<sup>1</sup> Fray Angelico Chavez, "The Penitentes of New Mexico," *New Mexico Historical Review* XXIX, No. 2 (April, 1954), pp. 97-123.

morada rites, but apparently had not been permitted to do so.<sup>1</sup>

Since there is a paucity of reliable information, the Rev. Thomas Harwood's first-hand account of the forbidden secret rites which he witnessed on Good Friday of 1872 (or 1871) should be of great interest to students of the Penitentes. Furthermore, his wife's letter of 1874 in which she describes a public processional is likewise of historical value. But, first of all, a brief statement about the Harwoods is in order. In 1869 the Rev. and Mrs. Thomas Harwood arrived in New Mexico from Wisconsin as Methodist missionaries, he as a preacher and she as a teacher. They came at the urging of the Rev. John L. Dyer, who had known them in Wisconsin. At this time Dyer, a member of the Colorado Conference, was a presiding elder with New Mexico as part of his wide flung district. Although he was a Methodist preacher, the Rev. Thomas Harwood was a veteran of the Civil War. He served as an enlisted man in the 25th Wisconsin Regiment for eighteen months, and then as chaplain of this same regiment for another eighteen months chosen by unanimous vote of the regiment. He was in a number of engagements, and was wounded during the Atlanta campaign. The respect that he gained among his comrades-in-arms is shown by his election in due time as national chaplain of the Grand Army of the Republic, again by unanimous vote. Mrs. Harwood was a cultured, educated woman; she had been both a school teacher and a school principal in Wisconsin before going to New Mexico, as well as being a preacher's wife. Their practical intelligence is shown by their beginning to learn Spanish soon after their arrival in New Mexico, in order to become better acquainted with and

more readily accepted by the people among whom they worked. They both had long and distinguished careers as missionaries and educators, careers which were only terminated by their deaths.

It was inevitable, of course, that they would have become aware of the existence of the Penitentes before they had been in New Mexico for any length of time, for there were a number of moradas in the northern part of New Mexico where they lived and worked. No doubt they unknowingly had contacts with men who were members of this highly secret brotherhood; indeed, it was through such a contact that Harwood was admitted to the secret rites. It was but natural that they should have desired to witness the ceremonies, both public and secret. This they were able to do, for they both observed the public processional, and Harwood was admitted to the very secret morada rites in 1871 or 1872. What is more, each gave a fairly detailed and apparently accurate account of what had been witnessed.

Indeed, Harwood left two accounts. One, in the first person, was published in his book, *History of New Mexico Spanish and English Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church from 1850 to 1910*, El Abogado Press, Albuquerque. New Mexico, 1908-1910, Vol. I, pp. 166-169. Much earlier, on April 18, 1878, he had reported his observations to Mr. William G. Ritch, a leading citizen of Santa Fe who at the time was the Secretary of New Mexico. Mr. Ritch recorded this interview with Harwood in his *Memo Book*, No. 4, (R12212, v. 4), pp. 326-326a, using the third person instead of the first. This *Memo Book* is preserved in the manuscript division of the Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, whose librarian has granted permission to reproduce the interview with Harwood. According to Mrs. Harwood, her husband witnessed the morada rites in 1872, but according to Ritch the date was 1871.

<sup>1</sup> Marcus Bach: *Faith and my Friends*, Bobbs Merrill Co., Inc., 1955, p. 155. His account is quite journalistic rather than scholarly in nature.

This discrepancy is of little importance, for in either case the interview with Ritch occurred within but six or seven years of the event. Harwood's statement in his *History* is considerably later, some thirty-six or thirty-seven years after the experience. Mrs. Harwood's report of her observation of a public processional is recorded in a letter, dated August 22, 1874, which was addressed to an unidentifiable church paper. Fortunately, a copy of this letter was printed by Harwood in his *History*, Vol. I, pp. 242-243 thirty-four years later.

These three documents, two from Harwood and Mrs. Harwood's letter, are of considerable significance for our knowledge of the Penitentes in the early 1870's in northern New Mexico. Harwood not only was one of a very select number of Anglo-Americans to witness the secret morada rites, but in addition he has given us a reliable account of what he had witnessed. To repeat, insofar as can be ascertained, his account is unique. Mrs. Harwood was not the first Anglo-American woman to witness the public procession, but it is probable that her letter is the first published description written by a woman of this ceremony. Accordingly, all three of these documents are transcribed verbatim as valuable sources for the study of the Penitentes.

Mrs. Harwood does not date the processional that she witnessed. Since her letter was written in 1874, the ceremony may have occurred in the Easter period of that year, or a year or two earlier. In any event, it is an all but contemporaneous account of a Penitente processional witnessed by an educated American woman who included a few other items of interest. As such, it is an important document. The relevant portion of the letter is transcribed word for word:

Why then so much more interest is manifested by the church for foreign missions, as Old Mexico for instance,

than for the same foreign population in New Mexico, where here they are citizens of our own country, is strange, but "distance lends enchantment to the view" in the missionary work as in all others.

Lent is kept in New Mexico in a manner that would surprise many of your readers, and should they fully understand it, they would be convinced that it is not necessary to go out of our own country to find semi-heathens, and that there is great need of missionary labor here. Many of the Mexicans still continue the practice of punishing themselves in various ways to atone for their sin. They are called penitentes. They punish themselves all through Lent but the penitente processions commence Wednesday at midnight preceding Good Friday, and continue till midnight of Good Friday. In their processions, some of them carry huge crosses weighing from two to three hundred pounds. Their limbs are bound tightly with ropes, their shoes have stones in them and sometimes they put branches of the cactus (prickly pear) under the bands of their drawers, and with a whip in one hand they lay the lashes on their bare backs till the blood flows to the ground. The crowd following, chanting in mournful strains, and often with tears flowing for the sufferers who are, in their eyes considered as martyrs. They close up the work Friday night by marching to the Morada (church) and locking themselves in where the work of punishment is continued with great zeal till midnight. Two years ago, they admitted Mr. Harwood to witness their closing ceremonies, though they scarcely ever admit any who are not in sympathy with them.

Every year we hear of some who kill themselves in this way; last year two died only a few miles from here. The surviving penitentes believe such go straight to glory where they wear a martyr's crown. The government never interferes. As these poor creatures are the most wicked and dangerous class of Mexicans, it is the most easy mode of getting rid of them. The day following Good Friday (Sabade de gloria) they, having atoned for the sins of the past year, begin with renewed zeal their various kinds of wickedness — drunkenness, stealing, debauchery and so forth.

Go into some of their churches, or

moradas, on Easter Sunday and you will see the blood on the walls, where it is spattered from their whippings.

Mrs. Harwood's strictures concerning the morals of the Penitentes may be, in part, due to her missionary zeal. However, Ritch notes in his *Memo Book*, No. 4, p. 326, that certain officials had stated that "immediately following Passion Week among the penitentes . . . is the time more frequently than any other in which thieving, murder, and crimes generally may be expected." Her statement that two participants had died the previous year just a few miles from where she lived may well have been based on more than rumor.

If it was risky for an outsider, and especially for an American, to witness the public processional as stated above, it was even more dangerous for such a person to attempt to witness the secret morada rites, to say nothing of being present inside a morada during these ceremonies. Even though he had faced death many times during the Civil War, Harwood was somewhat hesitant about entering the morada. A certain Jose who had worked for him was, he discovered, a Penitente, and made arrangements for him to enter the morada to witness the rites. Admission was gained because Harwood was a friend of the people, or, as his wife stated, was sympathetic with them. His ability to converse in Spanish no doubt was helpful in gaining this rapport with the people. Upon inquiry, Jose assured him that he would not be harmed. The secret meeting was in a morada at La Junta where the Harwoods were living, and was on the Good Friday of either the year 1871 or 1872. It evidently was the meeting that just preceded the processional characterized by the bearing of a cross. But let Harwood speak for himself, first in the *History* and then in Ritch's *Memo Book*:

I said "alone." I mean that I was the only American in the house with

the Penitentes, and I presume the only one ever permitted to enter from what I have since learned. As I rode up, one came out and waved his hand for me to keep back. I saw a Mexican in the crowd who had worked for me. I liked him and thought he liked me, so I beckoned him to come out to where I was. He came. He was a good fellow, but a Penitente, but I never knew it until that day when I saw him in the crowd. His name was Jose, accented on the last letter. It is Joseph, as everyone knows, in English. I said, "Jose, go tell your captain that I am a friend to your people, and I would like to see what you do." Jose went and soon came back and said, "Esta buena," that is "all right; come in." We reached the door. It was locked. The doorkeeper unlocked it. My heart almost failed me. I said, "Look here, Jose, you work for me. I like you and you seem to like me," to which he replied "Si, Senor," Yes, sir. "Will you allow me to be hurt in there?" He replied, "Nunca," that is never. I entered and the door was shut and locked.

The floor was dirt, no windows, one door and that was locked fast, one dim candle of mutton tallow. I had read of a place where "they need no candle, neither light of the sun." It that it? They call it a morada that is a "mansion." You will find the same word in the Spanish Bible, John 14:2: "In my Father's house are mansions, 'moradas.'" But dark as it was and as silent as it was, I began to around as the dim candle-light seemed to enlarge its light. In one corner of the room was a life-sized image of the Saviour on the cross, his hands and feet nailed to the wood and bleeding, at least it so seemed. Also his side was pierced and the blood in the faint light seemed real. In the other corner was a life-sized picture of "La Santisima Virgin Maria," the Holy Virgin Mary. Close to my feet were the feet of two of the Penitentes lying on their faces with feet and legs firmly bound with cords, and their heads toward the images. I supposed they were both dead. At the heads of these stood two other Penitentes facing the images in the corners. These like the two on the floor were nude except their drawers. They were both whipping themselves with whips made of the cactus plants, a tough, prickly plant common in all

this Southwest. I went a little closer to them and saw with my own eyes that the blood had stained their drawers and had also stained the floor. They whipped themselves to time, bringing the whips first over one shoulder, then over the other, and the sharp ends of the whips were applied first on one side then on the other of the small of the back just above their drawers. Except for the thud sound of the whips as they fell on the bleeding backs of the deluded fellows, all was silent for about half an hour.

The Revelator says, "There was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour." So there was in this morada. As it seemed to me, it was just about one half hour not a sigh or groan was heard. Then the silence was broken by the singing of one of the most doleful songs to which I had ever listened, all the congregation with husky voices joined in. Nearly another half hour passed with a little more singing and the Captain said, "Vamos." At this order to go, there seemed to be a struggle from death into life. The two men who I thought were dead, began to twitch their feet, and soon with help were on their feet too. I was so glad to get out, at the order, "Vamos," I think I must have led the procession at least out into the yard, but stepped aside and saw the poor bleeding Penitentes come out under their heavy crosses. As I rode up out of the valley on the Mesa, I noticed, I would think, no fewer than 300 people. Many of whom had their handkerchiefs to their faces, evidently weeping. I went home with a sad heart thinking that nothing could ever be done with a people so ignorant and superstitious as they were. But after a while I took a different view of it and said: "Surely a people who will punish themselves like that in some way to atone for their sins, if they could only embrace the thought that it is the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ that atones for sin and not their own, they might probably be reached easier than some others. And so we found it. Some of our most earnest, tender hearted people, and preachers were once penitentes.

It may be that Harwood depended upon his memory for this account in his **History**. However, he did keep scrap books (according to a statement in his

church record);<sup>1</sup> accordingly, he may have relied upon some early written statement in a scrap book for the narration in his **History**. In any event, this account agrees in general with the interview that Ritch wrote down in one of his **Memo Books**. The writing in the **Memo Book** is quite legible, save for a couple of words. No doubt Harwood used the first person during the interview, but for some unknown reason Ritch used the third person when he wrote the interview down for preservation in his **Memo Book**. He apparently used a good deal of care in transcribing what he recalled of the interview, for he made a few minor deletions and also added a number of words in small letters above the line. Since he was something of a historian, we probably can depend upon him as being a rather reliable reporter. Save for the deletions, which are of no significance, the following is an exact transcription of the interview:

In the margin: In the Cassa Morada of the Penitentes. The text itself reads:

Rev. Thomas Harwood, M. E. Missionary, stationed at La Junta, New Mexico, by permission was present at a gathering of the Penitentes in the day time in the canon opening into the valley at La Junta. He thus describes his visit. Having obtained permission through a person he had had in his employ and being assured that all was right he entered a door in the side of the room near one corner and took a position on the opposite side of the room near the middle. The room was almost 12 x 20, and was dark except as lit by two tallow candles. There were about 20 persons in the room. In the end opposite the entrance was in the right hand corner life size, a figure representing the crucified Saviour bloody from the wounds, in the left hand corner was the figure of the Virgin. In the dim light the figures looked artistic - good representations of the popular ideal of the originals. In the center of the room lay two persons prostrate on the ground floor, faces covered. The legs

<sup>1</sup> In the possession of The Rev. A. P. Gaines of Fort Collins, Colorado.

of the two were each bound by a cord, like a bed cord, to above the knees, the flesh above the cord was swollen and puffed up over the cord. In the binding the cords looked something like the diagram.<sup>1</sup> To their ankles were attached chains which restricted their step when walking. As they lay, they were motionless, and so far as outward appearances were concerned, they might have been dead. In front of the prostrate men were two others, with no other dress than their drawers of common muslin and a cloth covering their face. In their hand was a discipline of thongs of cactus, the ends being knotted. Their bodies were bent forward and they facing the figure of Christ and the Virgin respectively. The discipline was held in both hands and was applied deliberately with some vigor, first over one shoulder and then the other, the lash striking the back on the side opposite the shoulder from over which it was administered. Blood was trickling down the back and discolored the drawers, and as seen in the dim light he thought he saw blood on the ground. A chaunt or low dirge was crooned in the mean (?) time. He thus witnessed the scene for  $\frac{3}{4}$  — maybe an hour. It was becoming monotonous. Had the door not been locked he would have left. About this time, however, the chief brother cried out *vamous* and others chimed in. He thought at first they meant him. The door was opened, and then for the first time the prostrate men moved and arose to their feet. They were conducted outside and a heavy cross placed on the shoulder of each. Staggering, half stumbling, they were conducted in procession across a plowed (?) field to another house probably a half mile away. The two with discipline in hand were among the number and continued the use of the discipline and a deepening of the wounds in the all really badly lacerated flesh.

Turning from the sad sight he mixed among the multitude at the plaza nearby, of whom there was probably 300 to learn or observe how they were affected. Not a face indicated a disposition to treat the subject lightly, or trifling or jestingly. Many of the women were in tears. And then he left them.

Upon relating his experience to some American Romanists, they were loth to believe that he had been admitted to the sanctuary of the penitentie. One had sought admittance frequently, but invariably had been refused.

Interview April 18, 1878 at Santa Fe.

How reliable is this description by Harwood? Fray Angelico Chavez quite evidently believes that the report is accurate and unprejudiced, for in referring to it he states that Harwood "describes the rites correctly and minutely to Mr. W. G. Ritch at Santa Fe, but without any bias or disgust. Indeed, he himself seemed to be deeply touched by the reverent earnestness of both penitentes and spectators."<sup>1</sup> This evaluation by Chavez, an authority on the Penitentes, is quite significant.

The two accounts by Harwood, the one published in his *History*, the other preserved in Ritch's *Memo Book*, agree both in general and in detail, despite the time spread, one dated 1878 and the other 1908. There is but minor disagreement between the two sources, but in some instances one supplements the other. Likewise, to some extent Mrs. Harwood's report supplements that of her husband's. On the basis of these accounts it is possible to give a reconstruction of the rites of the Penitentes, both the public processional and the secret morada ceremony, as these were practiced in the 1870's. In this reconstruction the following symbols will be used for the ready identification of the sources: (H) for Harwood's description in the *History*; (M) for the interview recorded in Ritch's *Memo Book*; and (L) for Mrs. Harwood's letter. Where (H) and (M) are in substantial agreement no symbols will be used.

Mrs. Harwood relates something about the background and meaning of the ritual. She states that during Lent the Penitentes "punish themselves in

<sup>1</sup> The cords were criss-crossed, according to the crude diagram.

<sup>1</sup> "The Penitentes of New Mexico," *New Mexico Historical Review* XXIX, No. 2, (April, 1954), p. 104.

various ways" in order to atone for their sins. Harwood agrees that this was the purpose of the rites (H). The rites, according to (L) began at midnight of the Wednesday preceding Good Friday and continued until midnight of Good Friday. They conclude with a procession to a morada on Good Friday evening, where the Penitentes locked themselves in for a secret meeting where they continued with "the work of punishment" until midnight. What Harwood himself observed was apparently a secret meeting on Good Friday while it was still daylight (M) and the procession following this ceremony. He did not stay for the culminating rites in a morada. The date of his experience was either the Good Friday of 1871 (M) or of 1872 (L), more probably the latter, since Mrs. Harwood's letter was all but contemporaneous with the event. This discrepancy of a year, to be sure, is of no moment. The morada itself was located "in the canon opening into the valley at La Junta" (M) near where the Harwoods were living at the time.

Harwood's admission to the secret rites was arranged by a man named Jose (H) who had worked for him. Until that very day Harwood had been unaware that Jose, whom he considered to be "a good fellow," had been a member of the brotherhood (H). Harwood's ability to converse with Jose in Spanish no doubt made the arrangements possible. Harwood asked Jose to tell the "Captain" that he was a "friend of your people" (H). His use of the military title for the leader, known as the *hermano mayor* (chief brother) possibly reflects Harwood's military training. He is correctly called the "chief brother" in (M). According to Mrs. Harwood her husband would not have been admitted that he had not been in "sympathy" with the people (L). Jose made the necessary arrangements and reported that everything was "all right." The doorkeeper then unlocked the door to

admit him. Naturally, he was somewhat apprehensive about his safety and asked Jose if he would allow anyone to "hurt" him. Jose replied, "Nunca," that is "Never." (H)

The building was quite small, 12 x 20 feet in size (M). It had but one door, which was provided with a lock; no windows (H) and a dirt floor. It was very dimly lighted by one (H) or two (M) tallow candles. There were about twenty men present (M). Apparently they were standing, not seated. Harwood had an advantageous position, being near the middle of the room. (M) There were two important images (*santos*, to use the technical term) in the morada. In the right hand corner opposite the entrance, there was a life-sized image of the bleeding and crucified Christ on the cross, in the left hand corner, a life-sized image of the virgin Mary. In the faint light the blood from Jesus' pierced side seemed to be real (H). Both figures as dimly seen appeared to be artistic representations of popular concepts of Jesus and Mary. (M)

In the center of the room (M) at Harwood's feet (H) there were two men lying motionless on the ground as if they were dead. Their heads were pointed towards the two images. Either they were lying flat downwards (H), or were prostrate with their faces covered (M). In either case their faces could not be seen. Each of their legs was bound with heavy cords above the knees. According to (M) the cords were criss-crossed, and were bound so tightly that the flesh was "swollen and puffed" over the bindings. Furthermore, chains were attached to their ankles so as to interfere with their walking (M). Save for their underdrawers they were nude. (H)

Two other Penitentes were standing near the heads of the two who were lying on the floor, facing the two images in the corners. These, like the first two, wore no clothing save for

their drawers. Each one had a "whip" (H) or "discipline" (M) made of a tough, prickly cactus whip, first over one shoulder, then over the other, so as to draw blood. The blood not only stained their drawer but apparently dripped to the ground as well. According to Mrs. Harwood the walls of the morada as seen on Easter Sunday were also splattered with blood (L), but it is not clear with whose blood. These two were the only ones engaged in self-flagellation. The whipping continued for about a half an hour, with complete silence prevailing. Save for the sound of the whips on the bare backs not even a "sigh or a groan" was heard (H). The silence was broken by the singing of a most "doleful" song (H), a "chaunt or dirge that was crooned" (M). With all of the brothers joining in, this chanting continued for another half-hour or so (H). The total period of flogging and chanting was about an hour (H), or perhaps a little less, three-quarters of an hour to an hour (M). It is also stated in (M) that Harwood was finding the proceedings so monotonous that he would have left the building had the door not been locked.

At about this time the Captain (H), or more correctly, the "chief brother" (M), called out "vamous" (depart), and others chimed in (M). Harwood at first thought that this was a command for him to leave (M). However, he soon discovered that this was a signal for all to leave. The door was unlocked and opened (M). The two men lying prostrate on the floor were lifted to their feet (H) and (M). Harwood was so glad that the ceremonies were ended that he was about the first to go out the door (H). Certain of the Penitentes who were bleeding, so it is stated in (H), went out bearing heavy crosses. These cross-bearers are identified in (M) as being the two who had been prostrate on the floor; the crosses were not placed on their shoulders until they had been led outside. These crosses, as noted in

(L), were actually quite heavy, weighing two or three hundred pounds. Bearing their crosses, the two joined the procession and staggered across the field to a building (another morada?) about one-half mile away (M). The two who had been flogging themselves also joined the procession and continued to lacerate their bleeding flesh with their disciplines (M). It is stated in addition in (L) that some of the men had stones in their shoes and had put cactus under the bands of their drawers.

There were about 300 persons watching the procession according to both (H) and (M). The crowd in the procession witnessed by Mrs. Harwood chanted in "mournful strains." A number in the procession were weeping (H) and (L), especially the women (M). It is stated in (M) that none treated the matter "lightly, or triflingly or jestingly." Indeed, it is evident that it was a most solemn occasion. Harwood, who had seen enough, made no attempt to go with the procession to the other building for the rites that presumably would continue until midnight. Instead, he went home with "a sad heart," (H) At first he thought that he would be unable to do much with such ignorant and superstitious people, but in time he developed a different view. Indeed, some of his most earnest people, preachers, even, had once been Penitentes (H).

It is quite likely that neither of Harwood's accounts of the secret morada rites adds anything to our information concerning these ceremonies, for from one source or another these rites had been reconstructed by students of the Penitentes. However, they do give us an authentication by an eye witness of what actually transpired within the morada. We may be reminded of the Hellenistic mystery religions whose secret rites were held inviolate, even by those initiates who later on became Christians. However, on the basis of stray bits of information from one



source or another, literary, inscrip-  
tional, and archaeological, it is possible,  
let us say, to reconstruct the secret  
rites of the Eleusinian mysteries, or the  
mysteries of Isis and Osiris. Even so,  
those of us who have studied these  
Hellenistic mysteries would value very  
highly a reliable eye witness account  
of the secret rites so as to authenticate  
the scholarly reconstructions. So with  
Harwood's account of the secret mor-  
ada rites. Insofar as can be ascertained,  
his eye witness description of the se-  
cret rites is unique. Apparently one  
thing is missing from his narration,  
that is the words of the songs that were  
sung or chanted. He possibly did not  
believe that they were worth recording  
or he may not have heard the words  
distinctly enough to recognize them.

Those who desire to have further in-  
formation about the Penitentes might  
well turn to **Luicer and Crucifer: The  
Enigma of the Penitentes**, by George

Mills and Richard Grove. This is a re-  
print from **The 1955 Brand Book** of the  
Denver Westerners made for the Tay-  
lor Museum of the Colorado Springs  
Fine Arts Center. This brief article of  
about forty pages contains twelve im-  
portant illustrations. It also has a bib-  
liography (apparently prepared by Dr.  
Dorothy Woodward) listing some sixty-  
five article and books. Harwood's **His-  
tory** is among those listed, but the pag-  
ination of his account and of his wife's  
letter is not given. So the reference is  
all but useless, since the **History** has  
no index. There is no specific reference  
by Mills and Grove to either of these  
eye-witness accounts. Accordingly, as  
stated earlier, the verbatim reproduc-  
tion of these first-hand accounts should  
be helpful to persons who are inter-  
ested in the Penitentes, one of the  
strangest religious groups in this west-  
ern part of the country.

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