This road, however, can only go through the most burning love of the Crucified. It was that sort of love that lifted Paul into the third heaven and transformed him into Christ to such a degree that he could say: *With Christ I am nailed to the cross; it is no longer I that live now, but Christ lives in me.* It was also that sort of love that so absorbed the mind of Francis that his spirit became apparent in his flesh; and for two years prior to his death, he carried the most holy marks of the passion on his body. The figure of the six wings of the Seraph, therefore, stands for the six stages of illumination, which begin with creatures and lead up to God, to whom no one has proper access except through the Crucified. For anyone who does not enter by that door, but climbs up another way, is a thief and a robber. But anyone who enters by that door will go in and out, and will find pastures. For this reason, John writes in the Revelation: *Blessed are those who wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb, for they are nourished at the tree of life and they may enter the city through the gates.* This is to say that no one can enter into the heavenly Jerusalem by means of contemplation except through the blood of the Lamb as through a door. For no one is disposed in any way for those divine contemplations, which lead to ecstasies of the mind, without being, like Daniel, a person of desires. However, desires can be inflamed in us in two ways, namely through the cry of prayer, which makes us cry aloud with groaning of the heart, and through the brightness of contemplation, by which the mind turns itself most directly and intently towards the rays of light.

4. Therefore, I first of all invite the reader to groans of prayer through Christ crucified, through whose blood we are cleansed of the filth of our vices—in order that you might not assume that reading is sufficient without unction, speculation without devotion, investigation without admiration, examination without exultation, industry without piety, knowledge without love, understanding without humility, study without divine grace, merely mirroring things without divinely inspired wisdom. To those, then, who are already touched by divine grace—to the humble and pious; to those who are devout and sorrowful for their sins; to those anointed with the oil of gladness; to those who are lovers of divine wisdom and are inflamed with desire for it; and to those who wish to give themselves to glorifying, admiring, and even savoring God—I propose the following reflections. At the same time I warn them that to have a mirror placed before them externally\(^1\) is of little or no use unless the mirror of the mind is first cleansed and polished. Therefore, O child of God, train yourself first to be more sensitive to the stinging bite of conscience before you raise your eyes to those rays of wisdom that are reflected in its mirrors—in order to avoid falling into an even deeper pit of darkness as a result of the very act of looking at these rays. <...>