**throne a book** (i. e., “a roll of a book,” as  
in Ezek. ii. 9 f. This explanation alone  
will suit the meaning of the word as applied  
to the contemporary practice regarding   
sacred writings. See also Jer. xxxvi.  
2, 23; Zech. v. 2: and below) **written  
within and behind** (such scrolls, written  
not only, as commonly, on the inner side,  
but also on the outer, which, to one reading  
the inner, was *behind* [see below], are  
mentioned by Pliny, Lucian, Juvenal, and  
Martial. This writing, within and without,  
so that the whole roll was full, seems  
to betoken the *completeness* of the contents  
as containing the divine counsels:  
there was no room for addition to that  
which was therein written. This would  
be of itself a sufficient reason for the  
*fulness* of the scroll. To see two *divisions  
of written matter* indicated, by the writing  
within, and by that on the back, correspondent  
to one another, seems hardly  
warranted by the text), **fast-sealed with  
seven seals** (not, consisting of seven  
writings, each sealed with one seal, as  
various Commentators hold: but one  
book, fastened with seven seals, which  
were visible to the Apostle. Various ingenious  
methods have been imagined, by  
which the opening of each of these seals  
may have loosened a corresponding portion  
of the roll. But they all proceed on  
the assumption that the roll in the vision  
was *unfolded*, which is nowhere to be  
gathered from the text. Nor have we any  
right to say that the separate visions  
which follow the opening of each seal are  
identical with *separate portions* of writing  
on the roll. These visions are merely symbolic  
representations of the progress of  
God’s manifestation of the purpose of His  
will; but no portion of the roll is actually  
unfolded, nor is any thing read out of the  
book. Not its contents, but the gradual  
stops of access to it, are represented by  
these visions. What is *in* that book, shall  
not be known, until there shall be known  
to the powers and authorities in the heavenly  
places, by the Church, the manifold  
wisdom of God, Eph. iii. 10: till those  
material events, which marked the gradual  
opening of the sum of God’s purposes, are  
all past, and the roll is contemplated in its  
completeness by the spirits of the glorified  
hereafter. This *completeness* is here set  
forth to us again by the mystic number  
*seven.* There are some excellent remarks  
on the entire distinctness *of the opening  
of the seals,* and the *reading of the book*,  
in Cornelius-a-lapide: “For nothing in the  
book would be read, except after the opening  
of all seven seals; for when all were  
opened, then at length the book could be  
opened and read, not before.” So also  
Ribera: “Those calamities which were  
involved in the seals, were all to come,  
before the things which were written in  
the book appeared and were known.”

Mr. Elliott, in his work “Apocalypsis  
Alfordiana,” specially directed against  
my commentary on this book, treats this  
view with all the scorn which is unfortunately  
so characteristic of him: calling it  
absurd, unscriptural, &c. He has not produced  
a word of proof, or even illustrative  
corroboration, of his own view, that the  
opening of each seal corresponds to the  
unrolling of a certain portion of the scroll:  
but has contented himself with re-asserting  
it in the strongest language, and pouring  
contempt on those who hold the other  
view. I grieve to say, that this is so often  
the case throughout his above-mentioned  
work, as to render it impossible for me, in  
many places, to meet his objections in argument.  
One who distrusts his own as well  
as all other explanations, and believes that  
much of this mysterious book is as yet unfathomed,  
is no match for one who hesitates  
not on every occasion to shew his  
confidence that he is in the right, and all  
who differ from him are wrong.

An enquiry here arises, *What is represented by  
this Book?* Opinions have been very various.  
1) Some of our earliest Commentators  
understood by it the Old Testament:  
or the Old and New conjoined. It  
will appear from the extracts given in my  
Greek Test., that the opening of the seals  
was very generally by the earlier fathers  
and interpreters taken to mean, the fulfilment,  
and consequent bringing to light,  
of Old Test. prophecy by the events of  
Redemption as accomplished in the Person  
of our Lord. But, if so, then this view  
cannot consist with what follows in the  
Apocalypse. For manifestly the opening  
of the seals, as notified by the symbolic  
visions belonging to each, does not relate  
to things past, but to things which were  
yet future when this book was written.  
Nor can this apparent consensus of the