Elizabeth Melville's Godly Dream

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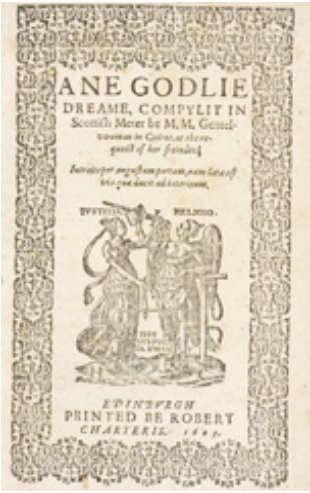
I said earlier that I would talk about the the first book to be printed in Scotland that was written by a woman. Today it was being filmed (I won't say for what, in case the filmmakers decide not to use it) so it seems a good time to make good on my promise. The book in question is ***Ane Godlie Dreame*** (Edinburgh, 1603) by **Elizabeth Melville**, or to give her her full married name, Elizabeth Colville, Lady Colville of Culross.

As was the case with Anna Hume, it was probably Elizabeth Melville's connections which made it possible for her writing to be printed. She was the daughter of a Privy Councillor, and well-known in local religious circles for her devout faith: the minister Alexander Hume described her as "a Ladie chosen of God to bee one of his saincts".

There are two early editions of *Ane Godlie Dreame*. Her name does not appear anywhere in one of them, where the book is described as **Ane godlie dreame, compylit in Scottish Meter by M.M. Gentlewoman in Culros, at the requeist of her freindes**. In the other, which is the one we have on display, it is called **A godly dreame, compyled by Eliz. Melvil, Lady Culros yonger at the request of a friend.**



Because they were supposed to be modest, discreet beings, it was quite common in the early modern period for women not to be named as the authors of their books. However, religious poetry by women, claiming like *Ane Godlie Dreame* to be directly inspired by God, was increasingly permitted. Was one of these editions intended only for the select few who, like Alexander Hume, knew and admired Elizabeth Melville as a pious author? The other would then have been for readers outside this circle, so that Melville's divine inspiration could find an audience.

If you have access to **EEBO** with an NLS reader's ticket or through another library, you can read the complete book on display in our exhibition.