



Translations (from English into Judeo-Spanish), retranslations and original works by the Scottish missionary Alexander Thomson (1820-1899)*

Traducciones (del inglés al judeoespañol), retraducciones y obras originales del misionero escocés Alexander Thomson (1820-1899)

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Abstract

The study of the literary production in Judeo-Spanish published in Constantinople in the 19th century has drawn the attention of historians and linguists interested Sephardic research in the last decade (García Moreno, 2013; 2018; 2019). However, previous research had not delved into the analysis of the authorship of all the previously assigned works to the Protestant missionary from the Free Church Scotland, namely, Alexander Thomson (1820-1899). After summarizing the historical and biographical context of this author, this article sheds light into Thomson's different writing periods, thus detailing the numerous translations and retranslations (from English into Judeo-Spanish) and originally written works ascribed to him in each of these periods and known up to the present time.

Key words: Alexander Thomson; Free Church of Scotland; Judeo-Spanish; Constantinople; 19th century; (re)translation.

Resumen

La producción literaria en judeoespañol con fines proselitistas de los misioneros protestantes en Constantinopla en el s. XIX está ganando la atención de los investigadores de la historia y lengua de los judíos sefardíes en la última década (García Moreno, 2013; 2018; 2019). Sin embargo, ninguna investigación hasta el momento se había centrado en analizar la autoría todas las obras conocidas adscritas a la obra del misionero protestante de la Iglesia Libre de Escocia, Alexander Thomson (1820-1899). En este trabajo, tras un breve resumen del contexto histórico del misionero y su vida, describiremos las diferentes etapas de producción del escritor y maestro, así como realizaremos un listado de las publicaciones, traducidas y retraducidas (del inglés al judeoespañol) del misionero conocidas hasta el momento en cada una de estas etapas.

Palabras clave: Alexander Thomson; Iglesia Libre de Escocia; judeoespañol; Constantinopla; siglo XIX; (re)traducción.

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1. INTRODUCCIÓN

Hundreds of proselytist books have been written to educate children into Christianity, either into Catholic, Protestant, or Orthodox denominations (Ümit, 2014: 35). Since the Middle Ages, the Ottoman Empire has been regarded by European Christians as the Other, the heathen population (both Muslims and Jews) to be converted into the true and only God. As far as Sephardic Jews, most books published in Ladino in Istanbul until the 19th century dealt with religious topics (Ben-Naeh, 2001: 76). Thus, the mid-19th century was the time when Istanbul witnessed the emergence of Jewish periodicals written in Judeo-Spanish published in Istanbul, as well as books on language, dictionaries, and science books (Simon, 2011: 131). Moreover, Hebrew was not mastered by many inhabitants of Istanbul. In fact, “most Jewish men did not understand what they read and merely recited Hebrew and Aramaic phrases” (Simon, 2011: 127), a situation which, for Protestants, resembled the case of Latin and Catholics at the time. Moreover, many women could not read at all.

Protestants took advantage of several opportunities found in the Ottoman Empire. On the one hand, the Tanzimat period (1839-1876) allowed the opening of the region to the influence of countries like Great Britain and the US for political purposes. On the other hand, Sephardic Jews had lost their influence and prestige in the Ottoman Empire by the 19th century and Evangelicals used the educational gap to introduce the modern European education to both boys and girls, putting emphasis on poor students.

This article delves into the written production in Judeo-Spanish of the Scottish reverend Alexander Thomson (1820-1899), who oversaw one of the most prolific Protestant missions in the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century, namely, the Free Church of Scotland.

2. THE FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND’S MISSION TO THE JEWS

The Free Church of Scotland was an Evangelical denomination originated in the early 1840s due to a disagreement in terms of church politics with the Presbyterian national church. Therefore, as it had happened with the new Lutheran movement a few centuries back when giving up the Catholic church, ministers integrating the new church were a mere continuation of the previous religious and larger movement. However, the goal of the new schism and the one of the Established Church of Scotland as Protestant missions was intertwined, and the Free Church of Scotland merely continued what the older church had already started. One of the main goals of this church was to establish missions all over the world that could attract Jews and convert them into Protestants, as they felt this conversion

could accelerate the Christ's second coming (Martín González, 2022). Therefore, the Free Church of Scotland managed two main stations in Constantinople, one in Galata and the other one in Hasköy, where many Jews were living at the time. These stations were run by the mission until the early 20th century.

School affairs were the main activity organized by missionaries to attract new potential converts. However, school coursebooks and manuals were lacking, and the Free Church of Scotland set to produce them. In Thomson's words, "as there are no schoolbooks of any description to be had in Constantinople, the mission is obliged to procure them from the countries where they are published" (*PGAFC*S, 1852: 13). This is the reason why Thomson, assisted by other missionaries and converts, "for a considerable period" (*THFRFCS*, 1855: 284), set up himself to write them down as soon as June 1847 (*THFRFCS*, 1858: 178), when he arrived at the Hasköy station from Galata, even though he was still learning Judeo-Spanish (*PGAFC*S, 1854: 116; Lillie, 1846: 93). As a result, in 1848, he published the first books "as soon as our confidence in our acquaintance with the language warranted such a step" (*THFRFCS*, 1853: 204). This was their main goal, since their

great object here [in Constantinople] has been first to prepare statements of the doctrines and evidence of the gospel, and along with these, books of useful knowledge suitable for general reading, but with a special view to be used in our school (*THFRFCS*, 1853: 204).

Once books were published, missionaries needed to circulate them among the Jews of the community. Two main means were hence employed:

The first, and heretofore the most important, of which has been the employment of a colporteur, who has made tours through the country with encouraging success and resulting in frequent applications from the Jews of Roumelia for books of all sorts. He now anxiously plies his calling in the city, where he finds a limited but steady sale, although three years ago the attempt seemed hopeless. The other channel is the opening of a khan in Ballat, which, along with the sale of books, affords an excellent opportunity to a missionary of access to the people. The persons who had charge of this shop were at first seriously molested by Greeks, who have since repented and become friendly. The shop is the property of a Mussulmam [sic] who did not object to let it to Protestants; the rent has been paid by funds raised at the station; and the stock consists of Bibles in all languages (*PGAFC*S, 1852: 14).

About the instruction itself, missionaries started their work by teaching children Hebrew from scratch, and then taught them to become literate in Judeo-Spanish (*THFRFCS*, 1855: 292). According to the missionaries' perception, the language employed by them seemed "to be tolerably well understood by the people, which, in this department of our mission, is a matter both of extreme importance and of the utmost conceivable difficulty" (*THFRFCS*,

1853: 6). However, recent research published on this topic claims that the language employed by missionaries was not prototypical Judeo-Spanish (García Moreno, 2013; Martín González, 2020).

3. ALEXANDER THOMSON (1820-1899)

In this section we will briefly summarize Thomson's life and then we will shed light on his written production in Judeo-Spanish.

3.1. Life

Alexander Thomson's life and work have never been explored in detail, but several recent studies have attempted to summarize the main landmarks in his life (Martín González, 2019; 2020; 2021; 2022). He was born in Scotland in 1820 and died in Constantinople in 1899. He was always devoted to the preaching of the Christian gospel abroad. After his arrival in 1846 to Pest, he moved to Galata eight months later, and then to Hasköy where he oversaw the station for 13 years. During this time, Thomson set up a school for Jewish children and wrote and translated the first schoolbooks from English into Judeo-Spanish. In 1859, Thomson's house was burnt down, and his wife got sick to the extent he was removed to Scotland for some time. When he retired some months later, the reverend would no longer oversee the Hasköy station, as he was offered and took up a position as the agent of the British and Foreign Bible Society of Constantinople. From this point onwards, he was requested in different assignments and not only translated texts into Judeo-Spanish but in Albanian as well (Dennis, 1902: 152).

3.2. Thomson's literary production in Judeo-Spanish

Alexander Thomson was one of the key figures of Protestant missions in Constantinople in the 19th century. As previously mentioned, he started learning and writing in Judeo-Spanish in the late 1840s. All the works he would publish in Judeo-Spanish were written in the *Rashi* script, or semi-cursive Sephardi type, the most used style of writing for printing Hebrew and Judeo-Spanish texts in Constantinople in the 19th century (Ben-Naeh, 2001: 75).

However, printing houses available for Protestants at the time were not numerous. The printing houses employed by Thomson for publishing his books in Judeo-Spanish were A. B. Churchill (1825-1870), Artin Minasian, and A. H. Boyaciyan (1837/9-1914). The former

was as journalist born in Constantinople, who had succeeded his father as the owner of *Jeride Hawades*, a Turkish semi-official paper, after assisting him for eight years. He

promoted the cause of Turkish progress [...], much improved the character of Turkish printing, and also bestowed attention on the spread of popular literature, publishing several cheap works, which included romantic and poetical novels, biographies, descriptions of scientific inventions, and a cookery-book (Stephen, and Lee, 1887: 306-307).

Thomson firstly employed Churchill's (an official historiographer of the expedition of the Sultan to England in July 1867) services for printing most of his literatures written in Judeo-Spanish in the early 1850s. However, Churchill's death in 1870 might have led Thomson to find a different printing house. For instance, we know Thomson published the second edition of *Ele toledot bené Yisrael* in an Armenian printing house in Galata, managed by Artin Minasian, famous for publishing an *English and Bulgarian vocabulary* in 1860. New editions such as *Ele toledot bené Yisrael* (1886, 3rd ed.) and *La escalera* (1888, 2nd ed.) were published by Arşag Hagop Boyacian, who was the leader of the Ottoman Armenian Protestant community (Yildiz, 2015: 141). This Armenian printer was fruit of the American missionaries' proselytist work, as he was educated at the famous Robert College in Istanbul. Boyacian was associated to the Allies in the Crimean War (1853-1856), and "he served as a translator at the headquarters of the British army in Üsküdar (Scutari)" in Istanbul, where he came back after a short learning experience in the US to import to Turkey some modern printing techniques (Mignon, 2013).

Now, we will shed light on the different Thomson's writing periods, summarizing the list of works published in each of them.

3.2.1. *The first period (1850s): Initial translations and first editions*

We will chronologically list and comment on the confirmed or simply ascribed known publications by this missionary as mentioned by himself or secondary sources.

3.2.1.1. *Una carta de la quehilá de Escocia a los hijos de Yisrael, en todas las tierras de su esparcimiento* (Constantinople, 1848)

This allegedly first publication seems to refer to the translation into Judeo-Spanish of the *Assembly's letter to the Jews*, which was presumably the first translation ever written by Thomson (*THFRFCS*, 1853: 204). The target text has not been found so far. As García Moreno, based on Franco (1897: 276), which wrongly dates this letter in 1880, had already claimed, this letter was originally written by Robert Gordon (García Moreno, 2018: 152). The source text letter, which can be found in Wodrow 1844: 231-140, was in fact entitled *To the*

children of Israel in all the lands of their dispersion, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, written by Robert Gordon, but published in 1844.

3.2.1.2. *Algo de la historia de un hebreo aškenazita escrito por él mismo, mostrando las razones porque se hizo protestante cristiano* (Constantinople, 1848?)

This book might refer to the *Autobiography of a Jewish Convert* cited by Thomson as one of his first translations into Judeo-Spanish (*THFRFCS*, 1853: 204). Although García Moreno claims that this conversion might be referring to Alexander Tomory's (2018: 152), it is also very likely that it was a translation of Saphir's testimony (1843), which was commonly read among missionaries at the time to be encouraged in their preaching tasks.

3.2.1.3. *Una mirada a los cielos, o la puerta de la astronomía. Con 4 láminas de figuras del mundo, de las estrellas, vegó'*, (Constantinople: Nissim de Castro, 1850)

García Moreno points out that this book must have been written by the Scottish mission (2018: 151-152, footnote 6). However, it is difficult to ascertain whether this book was written by Thomson and the Protestant mission, as the manuscript employed misses a reference to the author and lacks references to God in its preface, commonly made in other missionary book's prefaces. We know Thomson published a book on astronomy. "Next, in the early part of 1850, came our astronomy of 172 page 12mo, the preparation of which had been considerably delayed by my being employed the whole day in teaching the school" (*THFRFCS*, 1853: 204). Saba-Wolfe claims this book was "approved" by the rabbis of Constantinople, namely, Raphael Shabetay Ben Yakar, Yaakov Bechar David, and Hayim Moshe Fresko, although she notices they might have been "unaware that the book was published under the auspices of the misión" (Saba-Wolfe, 2011: 140). The preface indicates that the book is based on Herschel, Nichol, Dick and Chimbers. The first person could have been William Herschel (1738-1822), who was a German-British Christian astronomer, founder of modern stellar astronomy for the observation of heavens. The second must have been John Pringle Nichol (1804-1859), who was a Scottish professor at the University of Glasgow. The third person must be Thomas Dick (1774-1857), a famous Scottish Christian minister. Although we have not been able to track the fourth source, we must acknowledge that there is a strong presence of Christian astronomers as the book's sources, which might hint to the possible authorship of this book by Christian missionaries.

3.2.1.4. *El cuento de la desolación de Yerusáláyim por Titus* (Constantinople: A. B. Churchill, 1852)

This book was allegedly published in Constantinople by Thomson at the A. B. Churchill publishing house in January of 1852 and had different editions. The second edition's name was changed to *El cuento de la destrucción* [...] (1858). Although the third edition has not been found, we know the fourth edition was published by A. H. Boyaciyán in 1889.

There is no doubt of the Thomson's authorship (García Moreno, 2018: 154, footnote 11), as the very missionary claimed that school duties retained him from publishing this work until January of 1852. This tract was published as "one of 60 pages 8vo" (*THFRFCS*, 1853: 204). Thus, we know that it was later enlarged, since the edition published in 1889 contains 94 pages. In terms of the evolution of Thomson's mastery of Judeo-Spanish, he believed that it was "tolerably well understood by the people, which, in this department of our mission, is a matter both of extreme importance and of the utmost conceivable difficulty" (*THFRFCS*, 1853: 6). This book appears several times in the church proceedings entitled as *The destruction of Jerusalem* due to the fire that burnt almost all of the copies they had (*THFRFCS*, 1858: 177).

3.2.1.5. *Una llamada a la casa de Yisrael para tornar a H' su Dio y vivir* (Constantinople, 1852?)

This text could refer to the tract on repentance, 12 pages, 12 mo, simultaneously published with the tract on *The Destruction of Jerusalem* (*THFRFCS*, 1853: 204). However, we know that the fourth edition of the text in 3.2.1.4 published in 1889 does not include any other booklet on repentance.

3.2.1.6. *Un mapa de la tierra de Kena'an en hebreo, con la antigua forma de Yerusáláyim* (Constantinople, 1852?)

The publication year is not provided by the list from which García Moreno (2018) lists these books and tracts. However, we know that Thomson referred to these maps as being burnt in the fire that took place in Galata in 1852.

3.2.1.7. *La escalera a la anpežadura con 71 grabados en leño para el uso de las escuelas y las familias* (Constantinople: A. B. Churchill, 1853)

Thomson, assisted by the aforementioned Jewish convert Alexander Tomory, translated this text from English into Judeo-Spanish. The schoolbook's structure and main educational purpose were taken from John Murray McCulloch's works, especially his *Third Reading Book* (1837b), "but with a considerable amount of Scripture history, natural history, geography

&c., which is not to be found there" (*THFRFCS*, 1853: 180). Thomson claims that the first edition of *La escalera* is made up of two thirds of translations and adaptations, whereas the rest of lessons were original stories.

McCulloch's source text was part of some series, preceded by the *First* and *Second Reading Book* and followed by a *Fourth Reading Book*, which combined numerous short stories written by different writers. All these texts were "intended for the use of Seminaries where the Preceptor follows the analytical mode of tuition and makes it his business to instruct his pupils in the *meaning of what is read* as well as in the art of Reading" (McCulloch, 1842: 7), as can be read in the list of educational books provided at the end of the book.

The copies of the *Third Reading Book* being handled for this study were published in 1837 and 1842. Thomson's text is not merely a translation of McCulloch's book, since he wrote several lessons himself. By the summer of 1852 Thomson was planning to write between 65-70 lessons, however, it ended up containing 80 lessons, 226 pages 12^o. The book was presented by the Assembly as follows:

The last production of Mr Thomson's pen will probably be the most useful, as it certainly is the most interesting. It is entitled the 'Escalera', or 'Ladder', being a collection in the Hebrew-Spanish language, of prose and poetry on a great variety of subjects – biblical, geographical, astronomical, scientific, and miscellaneous – with seventy-one illustrations 'in line engraving'. In the preparation of this and all his other Judeo-Spanish publications, Mr Thomson has had the valuable assistance of Mr Tomory, whose services the Committee highly appreciate (*PGAFCS*, 1854: 116).

3.2.1.8. Gospel of John, Chapters 9 and 11

Thomson published "two small tracts, containing respectively the 9th and 11th chapters of the gospel of John" (*THFRFCS*, 1853: 204), written in English (*THFRFCS*, 1853: 180), which have not been found yet.

3.2.1.9. The story of the conversion of a Jew born in Frankfurt in 1691 (1853?)

We cannot confirm whether this book was finally translated, but Thomson was planning to adapt it and circulate in Constantinople (*THFRFCS*, 1853: 179). It was a text sent out by Mr. Griffit, from the American Mission Press, to Thomson in November of 1852. It was a translation from a German original dealing with the biography of a Jew born in Frankfurt in 1691. This man had studied Rabbinical studies and traveled around the world but was captive and sold as a slave until returning to Germany, where he managed to read Isaiah 53 and was talked into conversion and baptism by a German Christian fellow, Dr. Reinhard.

3.2.1.10. A new translation of Psalms into Judeo-Spanish (1854?)

This translation was carried out by William Gottlieb Schaffler but aided by Thomson and other missionaries (*ARABCFM*, 1854: 68).

3.2.1.11. *Gan na'úl o La doctrina y declaración del capítulo 53 de Yeš'ayá. Traśladado del inglés* (Constantinople: A. B. Churchill, 1854)

The book is described as a translation from an Alexander McCaul's work in English, possibly a sermon or lecture on Isaiah 53. According to the records of the Bibliography of the Hebrew Book, this text, written in *Rashi* script, is held at the National Library of New York, although there is a copy at the Ben Zvi Institute. This latter copy does not show the name of the author, but it does mention it was published in Istanbul by A. B. Churchill in 1854.

3.2.1.12. *El catecismo menor o una corta declaración de lo que creen los protestantes cristianos, con las prebas menesterośas dadas de largo tanto del Arba'á ve'esrim como del Nuevo Testamento* (Constantinople: A. B. Churchill, 1854)

Although not stating the author of the book on the cover, both Romero Castelló (1992) and García Moreno (2013) have identified Thomson as the author of the text. García Moreno contends this text's source is the famous *Shorter Catechism* written by Wyatts, entitled *The Assembly's Catechism with Notes, or the Shorter Catechism composed by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster: with A brief Explication of the more difficult Words and Phrases contained in it, for the Instruction of Youth* (2013: 375). Thomson presented this book as a "compendious summary" of their faith (*THFRFCS*, 1854: 150). The reverend is surprised that it was being sold for other non-school related purposes:

A few copies of the Shorter Catechism, with proofs, in Spanish, have also been sold; but we did not anticipate any considerable general sale for it, having designed it almost exclusively for our school, where we have begun to experience the benefit of it (*THFRFCS*, 1855: 208).

In fact, according to Thomson, several years after its introduction in the school, despite its Christian ideology, the book was not allegedly very much criticized among Jewish parents:

You are aware, I presume, that years have elapsed since the Catechism with the proofs was introduced into the school, and singular to say, that notwithstanding the children's taking it home, and its doctrines so antagonistic to the Jewish faith, but in a few instances the parents have expressed their dislike of it (*THFRFCS*, 1857: 177).

This book was employed in the schools every week, as students were “requested to produce passages of Scripture, and to repeat such in support of some doctrine” (*PGAFCs*, 1847: 20-21); repeating “the same compendium of Christian doctrine from beginning to end without a mistake” (*THFRFCs*, 1857: 177). Most school examinations were based on this book (*THFMRFCS*, 1867: 59), not just in Judeo-Spanish, but also in Italian and Yiddish, or any language spoken in any school where these missionaries were employed, i.e., Arabic in Cairo (*THFRFCs*, 1861: 235).

3.2.1.13. *Ele toledot bené Yisrael o cincuenta y dos cuentas tiradas del Arba'á ve'esrim para el uso de escuelas y familias* (Constantinople: A. B. Churchill, 1854)

This text was retranslated by Thomson in 1868 and published by Artin Minasian in Constantinople, whose edition we have not found yet; and which once again retranslated by the missionary and published by A. H. Boyaciyan in Constantinople. The book was a total success, although “the extremely low prices at which we have to sell our publications makes the pecuniary result insignificant” (*THFRFCs*, 1855: 208). This translation from *Dr. Barth's Bible Stories* (1851?) was intended to

be read by any Jew without giving offence, as it is confined for the most part to the text of Scripture without note or comment [...]. This little work does not, indeed, to the Jewish mind, as now perverted by tradition, convey the truths of the gospel with degree of prominence; yet we cannot but hope much good from its circulation, as it at least presents the connected narrative of Old Testament History unperverted by the mass of silly traditions with which the Rabbis have encumbered it (*THFRFCs*, 1857: 206).

This children's book was one of the most successful works ever written for Christian educational purposes. By 1945, 483 editions had already appeared, selling over two million copies (Anderson, 1999: 45) and being translated to 87 languages (Herppich, 2016: 149). The original text was written in German under the name of *Zweymal zwey und funfzig Biblische Geschichten* (1832), which was based on Johann Hübner's work and was a reaction to Christoph von Schmid's children's Bible, “which according to Barth was too sentimental and not close enough to the biblical text itself” (Adam, 2005: 249). This original text in German was published in two parts, the first dealing with the Old Testament, written by Ludwig Georg Hochstetter, and the second based on the New Testament, written by the Pietistic Christian Gottlob Barth (1799-1862)¹. As Binder claims, both works' authorship was

¹ Considered one of the most important German-speaking Revivalist authors for young and old people, “editor of magazines and founder of the publishing house of Calw in Württemberg” (Rutschmann, 2005: 104). Revivalists published books for educational purposes, namely, catechisms, prayers, and tracts for young people. Since 1820, most of their focus was placed under literature that could be useful for missions (Rutschmann, 2005: 104), which attracted the attention of Thomson.

united and attributed only to Barth some years later (2006: 233). These texts were likely to be translated into English a few years later. Thomson's translation from English into Judeo-Spanish was in turn translated from the 13th German edition of the book, published in 1845 (*TEMMC*, 1845: 28).

3.2.1.14. *The Martyrs of Madagascar* (Constantinople, 1854)

This tract (published in 1854) was published with woodcut illustrations, supposedly published in December of 1854 (not found yet). Another allegedly translation from English that missionaries believed that "has considerably interested the Jews" (*THFRFCS*, 1855: 208).

3.2.1.15. Calvin Society's Bible Geography (1855?)

Thomson was engaged in 1855 in the translation of this "small manual" about geography (*THFRFCS*, 1855: 208). We can neither find nor confirm it was eventually published. We do know that Thomson was planning to write a book on Geography as early as 1853, when he had expressed "a desire for a little treatise on geography – and should our funds permit, I believe that we could not more effectually promote the evangelization of the community in present circumstances than by preparing a school-book on that subject" (*THFRFCS*, 1853: 15). Since 1853, Thomson was looking for an English source from which to translate this text:

Should there be a suitable work of this kind issued by the Calw Book Society, we shall readily translate it, and may thus procure the necessary funds from that Society [...]. I believe I need hardly add that all the publications of that Society are eminently suitable for the young, and thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the Gospel (*THFRFCS*, 1853: 15).

3.2.1.16. *La alma de hombre para el ampeçamiento de las criaduras* (Constantinople: A. B. Churchill, 1855)

This book revolves around the dialog of a father and his son regarding death and God's providence in 120 pages. The manuscript held at the Ben Zvi Institute does not mention the author of the book, although it claims it had been published in Constantinople by A. B. Churchill in 1855. Subaşı and García Arévalo (2021: 484), following García Moreno (2018: 152), believe the author is Thomson, or at least he was involved in this retranslation process of the original text.

3.2.1.17. *The Diamond Bracelet* (Constantinople, 1855)

This small tract, supposedly published in January of 1855, was a translation from English into Judeo-Spanish targeting young Jews and containing numerous woodcut illustrations.

Both the previous book and this one was meant as part of their strategy “to engage the attention of the young, and to propose as far as our time and funds will allow us, to publish at intervals little works specially adapted for them” (*THFRFCS*, 1855: 208).

3.2.1.18. *Silabario o ayuda para ampezár a meldar para el uso de las escuelas de los juidíos sefaradim* (Constantinople, 1855)

This short text, written in Judeo-Spanish with Hebrew letters, was intended to help children learn to read in their language in *Rashi* script. However, the educative aim seems to be exceeded by a hidden purpose, that is, introducing children to Christian ideas in the first texts there found, as well as “Protestant codes of conduct and ethics” (Saba-Wolfe, 2011: 138-139). García Moreno claims that this text is the first edition of some others which were published by the Free Church of Scotland under the name of *Silabario español* (2018: 153), which Saba-Wolfe also associated to this mission, “since some of its illustrations also appeared in *La escalera*” (1853) (Saba-Wolfe, 2011: 140). This text was retranslated in 1870, 1880, and 1884.

3.2.1.19. A tract briefing the Jewish Mission in Constantinople (1856?)

This tract describes the Jewish Mission in Constantinople “at the request of the Committee, which speedily reached a second edition, and which the Committee recommend to all who desire information on this subject” (*PGAFCS*, 1856: 10-11). This text has not been found yet but we believe it was published in English because of its target audience.

3.2.1.20. *Toledot Yešú ‘a haMašíaḥ o Sesenta y nueve cuentos tirados del Nuevo Testamento. Para el uso de escuelas y familias. Con grabados. Trasladado del inglés con adiciones* (Constantinople: A. B. Churchill, 1857)

This book was possibly a translation of the New Testament lessons found in *Dr. Barth’s Bible Stories*. We can confirm Thomson’s authorship by one of his own letters.

The New Testament Stories is now about half printed. It is to be expected that it will encounter greater difficulties in making its way among the people, than the little volume of which I have spoken; yet for schools it will be of great service, and wherever read it will exhibit clearly the work, and person, and doctrines of the Lord Jesus. Indeed, so strictly does it adhere to the text of Scripture, with a few occasional reflections, that the translation has called for a degree of critical attention which any other book would not have required. It will form a slightly abridged harmony of the Gospels, and may thus be of great value for junior classes in any school that may yet be established. Of that we would not despair,

though as yet the inability to find premises has proved a formidable obstacle (*THFRFCS*, 1857: 207).

3.2.1.21. Hymns and psalms (1857?)

The new hymnbook contained metrical translations of psalms previously published by the American missionaries

publishing in the same tract a number of other hymns and [around 10] psalms which had been for some years in use in our own school, and of making some additional versions of psalms and favourite hymns. The tract contains imitations of the hymns: "Just as I am", "Young children once to Jesus came", "Among the deepest shades of night", "When little Samuel woke", "Triumphant arch that fill'st the sky", "Little drops of water", "How doth the little busy bee", "Must this body die", and some others not strictly religious that were fitted for the school (*THFRFCS*, 1857: 47).

3.2.2. *The second period (1870s-1880s): Retranslations and re-editions*

Thomson left his position as manager of the Hasköy station at the end of the 1850s. However, he would continue publishing books in Judeo-Spanish three decades later. This period is now full of retranslations and re-editions of texts which were published during the first writing period. Furthermore, Thomson was required to change his publishing house, mainly due to Churchill's death. Therefore, the main publishing house employed in this period was Arşag Hagop Boyaciyán, who was the leader of the Ottoman Armenian Protestant community (Yildiz, 2015: 141).

3.2.2.1. *Ele Toledot Bené Yisrael, o cincuenta y dos cuentas tiradas del Arba'á ve'esrim para el uso de escuelas y familias, con grabados* (Constantinople: Artin Minasian, 1868)

This is the second edition of the translation of *Dr. Barth's Bible Stories* (see 3.2.1.13). The entire book has not been found yet, but a partial manuscript was recently found at the Stanford Library and identified as such by the author of this article. This text actually belongs to a middle writing period by Thomson, as it was published only 14 years after the initial translation of the same text.

3.2.2.2. *Silabario* (1870, 1880, 1884)

This text was a retranslation from the previous edition (see 3.2.1.18).

3.2.2.3. *El libro de oraciones según el uso de la quehilá del Mašiaḥ de Inglaterra y Irlanda* (Constantinople: A. Boyaciyan, 1872)

This book was a translation of English prayers carried out by the Irish and English church. The manuscript held at the Ben Zvi library in Jerusalem does not show any authorship but the name of the two churches mentioned in the title.

3.2.2.4. *Séfer Torá, Nebi'im veKetubim / El libro de la Ley, los Profetas y las Escrituras, trasladado en la lengua española* (Constantinople: A. H. Boyaciyan, 1873)

Although wrongly associated to Thomson in the past (García Moreno, 2013: 373; Pueyo Mena, 2014: 177; 258), this Bible was the translation into an idiomatic Judeo-Spanish version carried out by Rev. Dr. James Christie (1835-1913)² in 1873 (Johnston, 1888: 318). According to Protestant literature, his translation was the second revision of the Ferrara Bible (1553, 1661), when he was the mission superintendent of Safed (Walker, 1895: 178). He had been preceded by both Rev. H. D. Leeves, an agent of the British and Foreign Bible Society in Turkey, and Schaufliker's translation of 1841. The former was just supervised by the Protestant agent but prepared by Athias Leon in Corfu in 1829 and reprinted in Athens in 1844. Finally, Christie's translation was followed by another missionary of the Church of Scotland, D. B. Spence, whose revision of 1896 had been published by the British and Foreign Bible Society (Dennis, 1888: 153).

3.2.2.5. *Prebas de las profecías antiguas* (Constantinople, 1874), *Los senderos antiguos* (Constantinople, ca. 1880)

This book was a translation of Alexander McCaul's *Old Paths* into Judeo-Spanish (1836). The manuscript from the National Library of Israel does not include a cover, so we miss the information of the author and place of publication. The book is divided into 28 chapters, each of 28 pages, and it discusses why Judaism is wrong in its practices and beliefs from a Protestant point of view.

² Ordained and licensed by the Presbytery of St. Andrews on January 30th, 1861, he was a missionary at Constantinople from 1861 to 1879. He translated the Judeo-Spanish Old Testament for the American Society and the New Testament in Judeo-Spanish (1877) for the British and Foreign Bible Society (Scott, 1915: 149).

3.2.2.6. *Ele Toledot Bené Yisrael, quiere decir ciento y diez y siete cuentos tirados del Arba'á ve'esrim y de las historias antiguas* (Constantinople: A. H. Boyaciyan, 1886)

This is the third edition, second retranslation, and very much enlarged edition of the translation of *Dr. Barth's Bible Stories* (see 3.2.1.13).

3.2.2.7. *Libro de lectura* (Hasköy, Constantinople: Free Church of Scotland, 1887)

This book was published by the missionaries of the Free Church of Scotland in their own printing house in Hasköy. Although the book does not hint to any particular author, we can expect that Thomson was involved in the publication of the book, as he was assisting the mission every now and then was also the agent of the British Society in Turkey. By comparing the 75 stories appearing on this book, we can confirm that 12 correspond somehow with lessons taken from *La escalera* in some of the information being conveyed: "La oveja" (p. 8, lesson 17 in 1853, 25 and 26 in 1888), "El elefante" (p. 26, lesson 76 in 1853), "El león" (p. 33, lesson 75 in 1853, 116 in 1888), "El papel" (p. 40, lesson 57 in 1853, 100, 101, and 102 in 1888), "Las hormigas blancas" (p. 50, lesson 22 in 1853, 23 in 1888), and lessons on seasons, namely, "La primavera" (p. 65), "El verano" (p. 69), "El otoño" (p. 74), "El invierno" (p. 78), which are dealt with in lessons 54 in 1853 and 84 in 1888; "La caña de azúcar" (p. 81, lesson 53 in 1888), "Los minerales" (p. 94, lessons 48 and 60 in 1888).

3.2.2.8. *La escalera o lecciones progresivas en la ciencia y literatura, con los prefixos y sufijos de la lengua española y la explicación de las palabras nuevas al cabo de las lecciones. Con muchos grabados. Para el uso de las escuelas y familias de los yisraelitas protestantes. Edición segunda mucho engrandecida* (Constantinople: A. H. Boyaciyan, 1888)

This is an enlarged retranslation and re-edition from the first edition of *La escalera* in 1853 (see 3.2.1.7). Whereas Thomson claims that the first edition is made up of two thirds of translations and adaptations, this second edition was virtually made of original lessons. However, we can tell that there are many translations, especially fables, science lessons, and poems. In fact, this book introduces the missionaries' main intention when writing these books, that is, showing their beliefs about Judeo-Spanish as an inferior language to modern Spanish.

3.2.2.9. Different tracts presumably translated from English into Judeo-Spanish in Hebrew letters and published in the 1880s-1890s associated to Protestant missionaries in Constantinople

Among them we find *Yisrael en el desierto; el culebro de alambre y las lecciones que nos anveza Bamidbar 21,1-9* (1883), *Preguntas y respuestas sobre las profecías en el Arba 'á ve 'esrim que tocan al Mašíaḥ* (1883), *El siervo de Yehová* (1883), *El Mašíaḥ humano y divino* (1890), *Sefer Yaḥaš haMašíaḥ* (1890), and *La Pascua* (1890). The first three booklets are combined in a manuscript at the Ben Zvi Institute which was published by the printing house Le temps in 1883 in Constantinople. *Yisrael en el desierto* delves into the Gospel of John 3,14-15 and how these Biblical verses relate to the story of the Bible told in Numbers 21. *Preguntas y respuestas* deals with questions and answers about the prophecies in the Old Testament related to the Messiah. *El siervo de Yehová* discusses the Book of Isaiah 52 and how this Biblical portion relates to Jesus Christ according to Christians. *El Mašíaḥ humano y divino* (1890) is a small tract that revolves around the Christian belief that Jesus Christ was both human and God. The copy found at the Ben Zvi Institute misses the cover, so there is no indication of the author or place of publication. The manuscript indicates it was a conference given at the Scottish school as part of a series, which could have been delivered by Thomson, as he tended to assist the examinations taking place at the Scottish schools. Something similar happens with *Sefer Yaḥaš haMašíaḥ* (1890), another conference delivered at the Mildmay Mission, a Scottish mission established by the United Free Church of Scotland in Hebron and Palestine (Marten, 2005: 100). This tract introduces Jesus Christ as both son of David and Joseph, again, referring to Jesus as a human and God. *La Pascua* (1890) is also part of the book series, and it deals with a dialog between a Jew and a Christian regarding this religious feast. Finally, in the 1890s, another tract (located at Bar-Ilan University) probably translated from English and allegedly entitled *El salvador de Yisrael* was published dealing with Jesus Christ as the savior of Israel. However, it seems that the author was not Thomson but G. P. Gilbert.

4. DISCUSSION

The Tanzimat period (1839-1876) opened new possibilities to bring forth the Second Coming of Christ. Protestants were invested in attempting any way possible to spread the Gospel of Jesus and thus draw Jews' attention to this figure as the Messiah. As it has been pointed out,

Protestants believed they were meant to accelerate the dawning of the millennium. Both the conversion of Jews and defeating the anti-Christ were necessary to bring Jesus' Second

Coming. All of these millennial ideas allowed Britain to regard itself as the new Jerusalem that was meant to re-Christianize the old Jerusalem and the Ottoman lands. Reasons for this colonialist agenda were not merely religious but they rather include a political or even an economic explanation. America also shared a common view, as they were thought to be the city upon a hill (Martín González, 2021: 57).

In this sense, Protestant deemed necessary to publish as many works as possible in the vernacular language of Sephardic Jews, even when their linguistic competence was not good enough or they were still learning it. The proselytist and imperialist agenda could not stop at any point, and Thomson is a good example of how committed missionaries were to convert their target audience into Protestantism.

We know that the results shown by the number of conversions carried out by the Free Church of Scotland is not boastful (Martín González, 2022) but they did excel at introducing modern European education, which can be explained by the numerous texts translated from English into Judeo-Spanish delving into not only theological issues but also describing secular matters such as geography or even fables whose origin can be traced back to Classical Greek sources.

Now, missionaries' works have been studied as part of Judeo-Spanish literature, but never belonging to their canon. It was Romero Castelló who already mentioned some of these publications thirty years ago (1992), but current studies such as Subaşı and García Arévalo (2021) who point out the difficulties from studying the translation processes followed by missionaries in the 19th century as well as tracing their original sources. Authors hardly ever cited anyone, and much of the information on the original texts from which they translated and retranslated texts can only be found in the letters written and sent to their church headquarters. In this line, as it was aforementioned, some authors in the past misidentified the authorship of certain translations such as the famous Bible translated into Judeo-Spanish in 1873, which was claimed to be authored by Alexander Thomson for several years. Thus, this study was needed to finally list of all this missionary's works and give way to further research on this topic, allowing other scholars to address some of these publications in future studies that analyze these works and can trace them in worldwide libraries.

5. CONCLUSION

Alexander Thomson was one of the most prolific authors in Judeo-Spanish in the 19th century in the Ottoman Empire. His works included translations, retranslations, original works, and re-editions. Most of the source texts he based his ideas from were English

schoolbooks which were being used in Great Britain at the time, as well as letters and conversion testimonies needed to summarize the Mission's work and alleged success that proved God's grace and support.

Thomson's production has been divided into two main writing periods, that is, 1850s and 1880s. The first period has been associated with the Protestant Alfred B. Churchill publishing house. This first period was the author's most prolific time, and it is full of initial translations from English into Judeo-Spanish as well as original works that summarize conversion testimonies. The abandonment of this publishing house for future works can be explained by the death of the young manager.

The second writing period, associated to the also Protestant Arşag Hagop Boyaciyan's publishing house, happened during the 1880s, when Thomson was no longer just working for the Free Church of Scotland's Mission to Jews but was the agent of the British and Foreign Bible Society of Constantinople. The missionary's production during this time is substantially reduced, which can be explained by the reverend's hectic work as agent, who was also in charge of translating and writing religious texts in other languages such as Albanian. Interestingly, we know that Thomson published his first retranslation of *Ele Toledot Bené Yisrael* in 1868, which marks a middle writing period, associated with the Armenian Artin Minasian.

This concise summary of Thomson's works is a fundamental literary context for further linguistic analyses of the missionary's language and ideology. Future research should attempt to address some of the reverend's works that have not been studied yet. Possible lines of future research ought to approach Thomson's collaborations with other co-religious missionaries and converts that helped him in the writing process, as well as the likely influence of the different publishing houses in this author's language.

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