

Rev. Fr. S. G. Perera, S.J.

His Contribution to Ceylon History

REV. Fr. Simon Gregory Perera, of the Society of Jesus, was born on the 5th of June, 1882, at Kalutara. He received his primary education at Holy Cross College in his home town, then studied at St. Joseph's College, Colombo, and finished off at Wesley College. At the age of eighteen he passed the Government Clerical Examination and was drafted to the Land Registry, Ratnapura. Here the call of God came to him. In 1905, therefore, he left Ceylon for the Jesuit Novitiate in India and from there went to the house of studies at Shembaganur, for a period of intense training under the strict mental and moral discipline, to which every member of the Society had to submit himself. In 1911, he returned to the Island as a Jesuit scholastic, to teach in St. Aloysius' College, Galle, until 1914, when he was called back to India for a further period of ecclesiastical studies. On the 21st of November, 1917, he was ordained Priest.

Fr. Perera's work for the history of his country began in 1915 and continued right up to his death, on the 19th of February, 1950. It was but natural that he should turn his attention, in the first place, to the historical records of his religious family for information about Ceylon. At that time, there were other Jesuits, like Frs. Hosten, Hull, Castets, Dahmen, Besse and Dahlman, who were engaged in the study of the history of the Jesuit missions of India. With their co-operation and the assistance and support of his Religious Superiors, he obtained, at much cost and trouble, photostat copies of over two hundred documents, all of them unpublished writings of the Jesuit missionaries in Ceylon in the 16th and 17th centuries, preserved in the Archives of the Society. (*CALR.* I, iv, p. 218). Besides these documents, he had the use of certain published records of the Jesuits, like *Monumenta Historica Societatis Jesu* (Madrid, 1894-1909), a truly monumental work, issued serially and running to thirty-six volumes, in which authentic documents were given with valuable historical criticism, and *Selectae Indiarum Epistolae* edited for the first time in 1887 in Florence, which gives the text of the letters in their original languages, Portuguese, Spanish, Italian and Latin (ib). From these, he picked out the documents which contained information about Ceylon, translated them into English and published them in the *Ceylon Antiquary and Literary Register*, from 1915 to 1920. Their value to Ceylon History is in that they were written by those who lived through the events which they narrated. In fact, the Jesuit Chaplain attached to the Captain-General's staff at Malvāna, was under instructions to make

of the country, and the names of the people, but not the words of the people themselves. The first volume of *HA. Hist. de Ceylon*, p. 71. Thus we have a list of names of the nobles of Niharaya, the pretender, in 1607. The names of the nobles of the kingdom of Galle by the Dutch in 1607, p. 210. In the terms of the treaty of peace between the Portuguese and the King of Kandy in 1617, given by one who discussed them as a member of the Portuguese Council (ib. III. l. pp. 49 ff.) the route of the Portuguese at Badone in 1638 (ib. V. iii. pp. 126 ff.) the state of the Portuguese colony in Colombo in 1553 (ib. l. iv. pp. 222 ff.) and the assault on the city by the Dutch in 1650 (ib. V. iii. pp. 128 ff.). In these writings Fr. Perera emerges not as a tire but as an adept in historical research and criticism. In 1941 he put together the information he had already published, brought in new material and composed a connected history of the Jesuits in Ceylon (cf. Jesuits in Ceylon, Madhura, 1941). Although the credit of having placed before the student of Ceylon history these important documents belongs to Fr. Perera it must, however, be pointed out that at least one of them, *The Description of Ceylon* by Fr. Manoel Barradas, S.J., who visited Ceylon in 1612, was already known to D. W. Ferguson; for, he translated and published it in 1886 in the *Ceylon Literary Register* (IV, pp. 130-135, 155-156).

His work on the historical records of the Jesuits led Fr. Perera to make a careful study of the *Conguista Temporal e Espiritual de Ceylon* by Fr. Fernando Queyroz, S.J., a work which had been declared to be second only to the *Mahāvamsa* in its value to the history of Ceylon. Fr. de Queyroz came to India in 1635, was Provincial in Goa from 1677 to 1680 and died on the 17th of December 1688. He never set foot in Ceylon and, probably, never set eyes on a Sinhalese, but composed his monumental work on the Portuguese period in Ceylon, entirely from information derived from printed books, State papers, private memoirs compiled by Portuguese officers and Missionaries, who had penetrated into every nook and corner of the Island. He consulted first-hand witnesses, men who had lived in Ceylon, who speak the language of this country, who had been present on the spot, and who were able to enlighten him on the history and geography of Ceylon as well as its language and literature and customs of the people, who knew of the deceptions, intrigues and genealogies of kings, and the prejudices and inclinations of the people, who were able to describe the personal appearances of important personages, and give minute details of localities. (*Cong. Hist. de Ceylon*, by Fr. Perera, S.J., *Hist. Association*, No. 1, pp. 80). Unlike the other Portuguese historians of the Portuguese conquests in the East, who were extol the exploits of their countrymen or with whom Ceylon was only a minor issue, Fr. Queyroz was concerned with setting forth a true and complete history of his countrymen's dealings with Ceylon and its people, their successes and failures, their virtues and vices, distributing with an even hand praise

and blame to friend and foe alike. From 1921 to 1928, he took part in the editing of *HA. Hist. de Ceylon*, 1928, his religious superiors granted furlough permission for its publication. The manuscript must have been sent to Lisbon soon after his death, but it was not printed. It found its way into the Royal Library, which John VI of Portugal took with him to Brazil during the Napoleonic wars, and was presented by him to the National Library of Rio de Janeiro. A copy made for the *Instituto Histórico e Geográfico* of Brazil in 1850, was entered in its Catalogue and mentioned by Sommervogel in his *Bibliographia de la Compagnie de Jesus* (VI, 134-2). This led Mgr. Ladislaus Zaleski, Apostolic Delegate in Ceylon, to procure a copy, which he later gifted to the Papal Seminary, Kandy. Dr. Paul E. Pieris saw it and, realizing its value purchased the 1850 copy of Brazil, published translated extracts from it and even used it freely in writing his book, *Ceylon, the Portuguese Era*. From him the Ceylon Government bought it and, failing in an attempt to get the Hakluyt Society to publish the text and translation, had the Portuguese text alone printed under the superintendance of Dr. Pieris. When the book was issued, Fr. Perera reviewed it in the *Ceylon Antiquary and Literary Register* (II, iii. pp. 158 ff.; iv, pp. 203 ff.), where he took to task, the author of the *Portuguese Era* for emending and enlarging by turns and rejecting such as are opposed to his own view of things, without any reason given, or emphasising sometimes unduly what supports his opinion of men and events. (*HA. Hist. de Ceylon*, II, iv, pp. 203-4). The Government, thereupon, invited Fr. Perera to translate the work, which he did.

It was by no means an easy task. For one thing, the text was terribly long, 1,054 pages folio in manuscript; for another, the language of the original text, though genuine Portuguese, was ' quaint and archaic, bearing to modern Portuguese prose very much the same relation as the language and spelling of Knox bear to modern English. But unlike Knox, Queyroz was heavy, pedantic and often obscure, with intricate and inextricable sentences of interminable length. Written as it was for Portuguese readers of the 17th century, by an author who lived most of his life at Goa, it had many Indo-Portuguese words and expressions the meaning of which must be sought in old reference books, dictionaries and glossaries'. (*Conguista*, English transl. Introd. p. 25). The difficulty increased considerably, since Fr. Perera's attempt was not to restate in English the substance of the original, but to produce an accurate translation of a source-book, in fact, the most important source-book of the history of the Portuguese in Ceylon. It cost him twelve solid years of intense labour, involving careful research, frequent consultations with other historians and Portuguese scholars, at home and abroad, and a great deal of travelling up and down the Island for information about places and persons. At last, in 1930, the Government Printer issued Fr. Perera's translation, entitled *The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon*,

researches into the history of Ceylon and keep a record of the notable events of the Portuguese *regime*. (*CALR.* II, i, p. 10; ii, p. 74). Thus we read in them about the rebellion of Nikapitiya, the pretender, in 1617 (ib. ii, pp. 130 ff; iv, pp. 224 ff), the aftermath of the capture of Galle by the Dutch in 1639 (ib. III, ii, pp. 216 ff), the terms of the treaty of peace between the Portuguese and the King of Kandy in 1617, given by one who discussed them as a member of the Portuguese Council (ib. III, i, pp. 49 ff), the rout of the Portuguese at Balane in 1638 (ib. V, iii, pp. 126 ff), the state of the Portuguese colony in Colombo in 1553 (ib. I, iv, pp. 222 ff) and the assault on the City by the Dutch in 1656 (ib. V, iii, pp. 128 ff). In these writings Fr. Perera emerged not as a tiro but as an adept in historical research and criticism. In 1941, he put together the information he had already published, brought in new material and composed a connected history of the Jesuits in Ceylon (cf. *Jesuits in Ceylon, Madura, 1941*). Although the credit of having placed before the student of Ceylon history these important documents belongs to Fr. Perera, it must, however, be pointed out that at least one of them, *The Description of Ceylon* by Fr. Manoel Barradas, S.J., who visited Ceylon in 1612, was already known to D. W. Ferguson; for, he translated and published it in 1896, in the *Ceylon Literary Register* (IV, pp. 130-135, 155-159).

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well as blame, to friend and foe alike. From 1671 to 1686, he toiled at it; on the 6th of January, 1688, his Religious Superiors granted formal permission for its publication. The manuscript must have been sent to Lisbon soon after his death, but it was not printed. It found its way into the Royal Library, which John VI of Portugal took with him to Brazil during the Napoleonic wars, and was presented by him to the National Library of Rio de Janeiro. A copy made for the *Instituto Historico e Geographico* of Brazil in 1840, was entered in its Catalogue and mentioned by Sommervogel in his *Bibliothèque de la Compagnie de Jésus* (VI, 1341-2). This led Mgr. Ladislaus Zaleski, Apostolic Delegate in Ceylon, to procure a copy, which he later gifted to the Papal Seminary, Kandy. Dr. Paul E. Pieris saw it, and, realizing its value, purchased the 1840 copy of Brazil, published translated extracts from it and even used it freely in writing his book, *Ceylon, the Portuguese Era*. From him the Ceylon Government bought it and, failing in an attempt to get the Hakluyt Society to publish the text and translation, had the Portuguese text alone printed under the superintendance of Dr. Pieris. When the book was issued, Fr. Perera reviewed it in the *Ceylon Antiquary and Literary Register* (II, iii, pp. 158 ff; iv, pp. 263 ff), where he took to task, the author of the *Portuguese Era* 'for emending and enlarging by turns and rejecting such as are opposed to his own view of things, without any reason given, or emphasising sometimes unduely what supports his opinion of men and events'. (*CALR.* II, iv, pp. 263-4). The Government, thereupon, invited Fr. Perera to translate the work, which he did.

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in three volumes, each volume consisting of two books, making a total of 1,254 pages, with 77 pages of index. This was, indeed, his *magnum opus* and, by far and away, his greatest contribution to the study of the history of his country, and, at the same time, his chief claim to be considered our best informed and most reliable authority on the Portuguese period in Ceylon, without, however, detracting even a tittle from the merits of that most painstaking and critical scholar, D. W. Ferguson, who, in his day, was deservedly styled 'the profoundest student of the Portuguese period of Ceylon history'. (*Ceylon Literary Register*, 3rd Series, I, 3; *JCBRAS*. No. 64, pp. 131-2).

From the *Conquista*, Fr. Perera passed on to the study of unpublished documents, which have a bearing on it. He procured for the Government of Ceylon two manuscripts from the Ajuda Library of Lisbon, translated them from Portuguese into English and had them published in 1930. The first of these two works, is the *Jornada do Reino de Huua*, or the Expedition to Uva made by the Portuguese Captain-General Constantine de Sa de Noronha, in 1630. It gives an 'interesting account of the plot that led to the betrayal and the rout of the Portuguese army, the death of the Captain-General, the surrender of the garrison of Mānikkaḍavara, the fate of the prisoners, the negotiations for peace and its conclusion at Aṭṭāpiṭiya, in 1634'. (Introduction, p. iii). It was written about the year 1635 by one who had served in the expedition and been a prisoner in the Kandyan country. Although there are three other accounts of this expedition, one written by the General's son, Joao Rodriguez de Sa e Menezes, to vindicate the good name of his father, and published in 1681 (*JCBRAS*. No. 41), another by Joao Ribeiro, in Book II, chapters 1 and 2, of his *Fatalidade Historica* in 1695, and a third, *Narrative of the War of Uva*, by a Sinhalese Catholic Priest Phelipe Botelho, quoted by Abbé Le Grand, in his *Histoire de l'Isle de Ceylan*, which is a free translation of Ribeiro's work, done in 1701, the *Jornada* contains by far the earliest, the most detailed and the most reliable account of it we possess.

The second manuscript is a short one of four large sheets of paper giving a very brief account, first of the rout of Constantine de Sa as narrated in Colombo by some lascarins who had managed to escape with their lives, and secondly a short account of the siege which the Kandyan army laid to Colombo. The writer is Affonso Dias da Lomba, who is mentioned by Fr. Queyroz (*Conquista*, XVIII, 120, 490) as one of his principal informants. (Introd. p. ix).

The Portuguese Tombos or land registers and the Forals or the registers of quit-rents, contain authentic information about the economic conditions and the system of land tenure, in the Portuguese territories of Ceylon, in the 17th century. From 1610 to 1615 four volumes were compiled, covering a

good part of the western districts of the Island. Nothing is known of the first and the fourth volumes; but there are copies of the second and the third volumes in the *Arquivo das Colonias*, Lisbon. They have been copied for the Government of Ceylon and these copies are now available in the Government Archives. A supplementary volume, containing details of the two Korles, *Māda* and *Kaḍavata*, was made in 1622, and the manuscript is now in the National Library of Lisbon. An English translation of this work, with excellent critical notes, was made by Fr. Perera and published as Bulletin No. 4 of the Historical Manuscripts Commission, in 1938.

In 1932, Fr. Perera edited with the help of the late Mr. M. E. Fernando, of the tutorial staff of St. Aloysius' College, Galle, the *Kustantīnu Haṭana*, composed about the year 1619 by Alagiyavanna, the greatest Sinhalese poet of the 16th century, after his conversion to Christianity. The poem celebrated the victory of Constantine de Sa over the rebel leader Antonio Barreto or Kuruviṭa Rāla at Lellōpiṭiya in 1618. There were two things the editors had to prove, the authorship of the poem and the conversion of Alagiyavanna to Christianity. By a very critical examination of the vocabulary and style of the *Kustantīnu Haṭana* in relation to all the other known works of the poet, it was clearly proved that this *Haṭana* or war poem, perhaps the first of its kind in Sinhalese literature, was the creation of Alagiyavanna's genius. His conversion to Christianity, though shown to be a historical fact, was hotly disputed by those who found it difficult to bring themselves to admit that the great author of the *Subhāṣita*, the *Dahamsoṅḍakava*, the *Sāvul Sandesa* and the *Kusajātakaya*, poems which have a strong Buddhistic flavour, could ever have embraced Christianity. This edition, however, proved to be a model of a critical edition of a Sinhalese poem. Five years previously, the same editors had brought out an edition of the *Subhāṣita*, but it fell short of the high standard of scholarship attained in the *Haṭana*. The experience gained in handling these two literary works, stood them in good stead when editing the *Āhālēpoḷa Varnanāva*, a laudatory poem written by Kavisundara Mudali of Vāligala about the year 1816. It must be remarked that in all these editions the plan of work, and the historical notes and comments were by Fr. Perera, while the literary introductions and textual criticisms were the fruits of his collaborator's deep knowledge of Sanskrit, Pali and Sinhalese literature. (cf. Introd. to *Kustantīnu Haṭana*, p. xxviii).

His researches in connection with the *Conquista*, led Fr. Perera to make a more detailed study of events, persons and places, mentioned in that work. These studies he published either as articles to newspapers and magazines or as lectures to learned societies. Of his serial articles the following are remarkable for wealth of detail and their wide historical range:—*The Rise and Fall of the Kandyan Kingdom*, in 27 articles, all contributed to the *Ceylon Daily News*, from the 15th of January to the 30th of March, 1927, *Colombo and*

the Beira (DN. 1929, 21, ix ; 4, 7, 31, x), *Kalutara in Early History* (DN. 1930, 30, viii ; 2, 4, 6, ix ; *Ceyl. Lit. Register*, 3rd Series, I, p. 92), *The City of Colombo 1502-1656* (*Ceyl. Historical Association*, No. 8, Aug. 1926), *The Rout of Constantine de Sa* (id. No. 15, July, 1929 ; DN. 17 ; xii. 27, 29 ; xii. 30), *The Portuguese Tombos* (DN. 1937, viii. 22, 26, 28 ; v, 8, 17), *Alagiyavanna* (DN. 6. viii. 25 ; 28. x. 31 ; 4. xi. 31 ; 6. xi. 31 ; 16. xi. 31 ; *Ceyl. Catholic Messenger* 27. x. 31 ; *CALR.* ix. pp. 45 ff), *History of Ceylon*, in 13 articles contributed to *Young Ceylon*, from May, 1935 to June, 1936. Besides these, he wrote on such fascinating subjects as, *Nursery of Kings* (DN. 13 ; ii. 26), *Autograph Letter of the King of Kandy* (DN. 2. x. 26), *Signatures of the Kings of Ceylon* (*The Aloysian*, Vol. V, No. 3), *Earliest Portuguese Tombstone of Ceylon* (*Cey. Lit. Register*, 3rd Series, IV, p. 233) *Christian Princes of Ceylon* (*CALR.* IV, pp. 115 ff) and a host of others. In fact, when all the historical articles contributed by him are counted up, they easily exceed three hundred. Many of his articles to newspapers do not contain references to sources ; but, had not physical disabilities prevented him, he would have reprinted them, with all necessary notes and references.

Although his research work on the Portuguese period was very thorough and comprehensive, it did not stop there, but extended over the whole range of our history and every aspect of it. What interested him in the Dutch period in a particular manner was the history of the Catholic Church in Ceylon, in the most eventful epoch of its existence, when the Faith of Catholics, after the crucial test of persecution, emerged triumphant and struck deep root into the hearts of its adherents. The information on the subject, contained in the works of such writers as Baldaeus, Valentyn, Knox and Saar, and in the Memoirs, Diaries and Instructions of Dutch Governors and officials, was very meagre and one-sided ; it had to be sought elsewhere, in the writings of those who had lived through the struggle and established the Church on a firm footing.

When the Portuguese were finally expelled from Ceylon (1656-1658) they left behind them thousands of Catholics scattered over the Island, especially in the territories that fell under the sway of the Dutch. The new rulers, impelled by political and religious antipathy, banished all Catholic priests under pain of death, proscribed all acts of Catholic worship, compelled all Catholics to baptize, marry and bury according to the rites of the Dutch Reformed Church and confiscated all Catholic churches and schools ; and, held out the most tempting inducements to apostasy. Thus the Catholics had to struggle on without priest or altar, without worship or instruction ; and this state of affairs lasted for thirty years. Then a holy Indian Priest from Goa, named Fr. Joseph Vaz, smuggled himself into Jaffna in the guise of an Indian labourer and gradually made himself known to the Catholics. Other Indian Priests from Goa, followed him and their combined effort restored

the practice of the Catholic Faith in the Island. They lived and moved among the people, they studied the customs and the language of the people and made themselves one with their flock. They were not only permitted to exercise their ministry in the Sinhalese kingdom, but even protected by the Sinhalese kings from Vimala Dharma Sūriya II to Sri Vijaya Rāja Simha. Now, these heroic missionaries have left on record their experiences in the Island, with side-lights on the social and economic conditions of the country, on the state of affairs in the Kandyan court and on the measures taken by the Dutch to maintain their newly won power. As these documents had been sent to their religious superiors in Goa, they were originally preserved there ; but later some of them found their way to the State archives in Lisbon. Making use of these documents and information recorded at inquiries made about the life and virtues of Fr. Joseph Vaz, in India and Ceylon, with a view to the introduction of the cause of Canonization of the heroic missionary, Fr. Sebastiao do Rego, at one time a member of the Religious Congregation of the Oratory to which Fr. Vaz and his companions belonged, composed in Portuguese a life of the saintly Priest. This work, printed at Lisbon in 1745 and its Italian version done at Venice in 1753, served for a long time as the only source of information about the history of the Catholic Church in Ceylon in the Dutch days. Then in 1867, a second edition of the original work, with notes and comments by Barreto Miranda, was printed at Margao, Goa. The notes were mostly from the *Chronologia da Congregação de Oratorio* (Chronicles of the Congregation of the Oratory), a manuscript work of Fr. Sebastiao do Rego, and from the *Life of Fr. Joseph Vaz* (abridged from do Rego) by Simon Casie Chitty of the Ceylon Civil Service, published in Colombo in 1848. Even these two works did not give sufficient information. It was Fr. Perera's enterprise during his sojourn in Europe, between 1932 and 1933, that brought to light a very large number of documents which give a connected account of the missionary activities of the Oratorian Priests in Ceylon during the Dutch period. These documents consist of letters and annual reports sent by the missionaries to their Superiors in Goa, and provide details, which are of very great value to the history of the Catholic Church during this most heroic period of its existence. (cf. *Sess. Paper XXI*—1935, Second Report of the Historical Mss. Commission, pp. 54, 55). They were translated into English and published by him under the title of the *Oratorian Mission in Ceylon* (The Caxton Printing Works, Colombo, 1936). With these documents and others he had discovered and printed works dealing with the Dutch period, he composed a *Life of the Venerable Father Joseph Vaz*, which is a masterpiece of historical biography and the best product of his ripe scholarship. (Catholic Press, Ranchi, 1943).

A full list of the manuscripts discovered by him in the *Bibliothèque Nationale*, Paris, the *Rijks-Archief*, Hague, the *Biblioteca National*, Lisbon,

the *Torre do Tombo*, the *Biblioteca da Ajuda*, the *Arquivo das Colonias* of Lisbon, the *Biblioteca Publica*, Evora, the British Museum, London, the Vatican Archives, Rome and the Archives of the Society of Jesus, are given in the Second Report of the Historical Mss. Commission (Government Press, Colombo, 1935). Copies of documents in the Lisbon depositories, in Hague and in Rome, were procured by him for the Library of St. Aloysius' College, Galle. They range from trifling private notes and letters to most important historical documents, such as, an account of the capture of Galle by the Hollanders written by the Superior of a religious Order who was present (38 folios), a supplementary *tombo* made in 1622 of the Two Korles and part of Atakalan Korle (135 folios), representations of the Camera of Colombo against the General D. Nuno Alvarez Pereira (34 folios), *Spiritual Conquest of the East* by Fr. Paulo de Trindade, extracts from *Livros das Monções*, a large number of documents relating to the missionary work of the Oratorian Priests during the Dutch period in Ceylon, a complete set of documents referring to the first and only expedition of the Dutch to Kandy and a collection of papers (201 ff) about the Dutch rule in Ceylon (rf. *CLR*. 3rd Series, Vol. III, pp. 287-9, 380-576, 95-6).

He also edited the *Douglas Papers* for the *Ceylon Literary Register*, 3rd Series, and reprinted them in book form in 1933 (Ceylon Observer Press, Colombo), and the *Kandyan State Trial*, reprinted 'from a pamphlet of which the title page being missing, the date and publisher cannot be ascertained' (op. cit. Vol. II, pp. 443, 497, 551; Vol. III, pp. 28, 325, 520, 561, etc.). These articles related in detail a *cusus celebre*, in which Molligoda, the foremost Kandyan chief of the day was placed in the dock with five other principal chiefs and Priests on the charge of attempting to subvert the established government. He had prepared an edition of the report of William Granville on Matara, but it has not yet been published. Granville was appointed to the Ceylon Civil Service on the 14th of March, 1804 and was Collector of Customs of Galle, Matara and Kalutara. It was he, who was commissioned to conduct the deposed Sri Vikrama Rājasimha, on board the 'Cornwallis', from Colombo to Madras, in 1816. (*CLR*. Vol. III, pp. 487 ff). A report by such an officer cannot but be of much historical interest.

In 1931, the Donoughmore Constitution, with its provisions for universal franchise, was established in Ceylon. To educate the people for their new responsibilities, it was desirable, more than ever, to encourage the study of the country's history, at least from the time that modern institutions began to arise. The Government, therefore, very correctly insisted that Ceylon history should find a place in the curriculum of studies in all schools. The standard work on the subject, at the time, was the little *History of Ceylon* by Mr. L. E. Blazé, which had appeared in 1890, and, in spite of its limitations, satisfied a demand. In fact, it was so popular that it went into a tenth edition

in 1937, being brought up-to-date with each edition. H. W. Codrington's critical work, *A Short History of Ceylon* (Colombo, 1929), was found to be too concise and scholarly for use in schools; moreover, it ended the account of British administration at 1833. In 1932, Fr. Perera published his *History of Ceylon for Schools*, which dealt with the entire period from the arrival of the Portuguese upto the year 1911, and with each edition carried the narrative forward, the last edition being in 1949, a few months before his death. It was written in the manner of Pelham's *Outlines of Roman History*, with sub-titles, illustrations and maps to assist the student. The wealth of information it contains and the clarity and critical balance with which historical facts are set forth and interpreted, make it a suitable handbook for all who wish to acquaint themselves with the history of the Island. The work became so popular, that, in spite of other manuals on the subject, specially those by Dr. G. C. Mendis, Lecturer in history in the University of Ceylon, it went into five editions within seventeen years, and, its Sinhalese translation, into two editions in three years.

It was Fr. Perera's intention to compose a similar work on the history of the Catholic Church in Ceylon, and when sickness intervened, he had done the first five chapters, covering the first fifty years after the arrival of the Portuguese. He was, indeed, the most competent person to undertake such a work and its accomplishment would have been the crowning of his 'endeavours to promote the study of the chequered history of the Church in Ceylon, so often misunderstood and misrepresented, at home and abroad'. (Foreword to *Life of Fr. Gonçalvez*, p. x). Before his time the works available on the subject were, 'A Sketch of the Rise and Progress of the Catholic Church in Ceylon' by Simon Casie Chitty, Colombo, 1848, the *Vinea Taprobanea* (in Tamil) by Philip Canjemanadan, Colombo, 1855 and *Le Christianisme a Ceylan* by Peter Courtenay (Mgr. L. M. Zaleski), in two volumes, published at Lille in 1900 and its abridged English translation by M. G. Francis, Mangalore, 1913. Of these, the first two books were brief accounts for popular consumption and the third, though full of interesting information, was not sufficiently critical. To Fr. Perera belongs the credit of having discovered and translated with critical notes and comments, documents of the highest value for a complete history of the Church in Ceylon, from its introduction to modern times. The *Conquista* and the Jesuit records provide the material for the Portuguese period, the Oratorian letters and reports (*Oratorian Mission*, Colombo, 1936, the *Life of Fr. Vaz*, Ranchi, 1943 and *Life of Fr. Jacome Goncalvez*, Madura, 1942) for the Dutch period and the documents from the Propaganda Archives, Rome, for the early British period. His numerous lectures and articles on topics of special interest to Catholics, (*Historical Sketches*, Jaffna, 1938), bear witness to his scholarly research and his capacity for accuracy of detail. It may be truly said that he, of all writers,

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made the Catholics in this country feel that they had a history worth telling and proclaiming from house-tops.

As a historian, Fr. Perera, was learned, laborious and critical. On the one hand, he avoided the dramatic school of literary historians, although when he gives the reins to his imagination he commands an impressive diction; on the other, he does not belong to the modern type of researchers in archives who are not ashamed of the dryasdust method. Although he had an admirable grasp of the whole range of Ceylon history and every aspect of it, he was strongest on the Portuguese period and the history of the Catholic Church in the Island, and weakest on the pre-Portuguese period, probably owing to the difficulty of studying the subject from documents written in the Oriental languages. Unlike many another historian, ancient and modern, he makes history tell its own tale, with great effect and without the wonted trimmings and exaggerations. This led him to deal out praise and blame with an even hand, to friend and foe alike, according to their deserts. His services to the study of the history of his own country are, indeed, so considerable that they are worthy of being recorded and gratefully remembered.

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