

published every year—whilst these stories and the almost lost words in which they were told can never be got again.<sup>75</sup>

Other correspondents also spoke of the great value they found in the texts. A retired Wesleyan minister and friend added that he could not find anything worthy of suppression. Another thought the many tales did not shock ‘good taste’ or ‘the domestic circle’.<sup>76</sup>

Another significant contemporary to support the work was Percy Smith who made extensive private and public references to its value. In 1888 he devoted a significant portion of his presidential address to the Auckland Institute to reviewing the contents and value of the first two volumes. He called them a ‘storehouse of mythological information’ which he considered would be referred to as the standard work. By preserving ‘this traditional lore’ White had performed ‘a work of very great importance and interest’. He felt the translation suffered by needlessly encumbering the English with renderings of Maori proper names. These, he suggested, could have been relegated to an appendix. He singled out the publication of variant texts from different sources and tribes as of value for comparative studies. In his view the ‘inestimable service’ White had performed for ‘the student of Polynesian mythology’ by publishing the work was only equalled by the works of Grey.<sup>77</sup>

The following year, writing privately, Smith again stressed the importance he attached to the variant traditions published by White. To him they were evidence of the accounts’ ‘authenticity and antiquity’. Nor was he critical of varying translations of proper names. He thought this resulted from the alternative meanings a word could have, and White was right in giving these. He accepted too the style of presentation used in *The Ancient History*. White, he suggested, had not studied deeply either philology or ethnology and had therefore correctly restricted himself to presenting the Maori text and translations, allowing others ‘more deeply versed in these sciences’ to summarise and show the affinities to the traditions of other races.<sup>78</sup> Towards the end of his life he still recommended the set of volumes, despite their many errors, for the Maori texts contained in them.<sup>79</sup>

Late in 1887 a second review of the first volume was published in the *New Zealand Mail*; it was far more complimentary. Taking a dig at the *Post* reviewer it referred to the ‘storm of prurient indignation’, believing it had influenced the government to consider for a brief time ending the work. The second reviewer may have had connections in official circles as the review set out remarkably clearly the conditions of White’s appointment. The reviewer singled out the Maori song translations as ‘one especially excellent part of this book’. He believed the literal translation of traditions one of the strong points, and thought the material on the *wharekura*, the creation and a mythical flood had never been so clearly shown before.<sup>80</sup>