

“O le matāfaioi le maluāpapa o le aiā tatau” (“Human responsibility is the foundation rock of human rights”): Managing cultural and religious diversity in the Pacific

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I dedicate this paper to the memory of Reverend Oka Fauolo

Over the last few years one of my rituals before giving an address like this was to take my ideas to Oka and we would sit, talk, debate and laugh about them. Oka was family. He and I grew up on a diet of Samoan language, stories and history fed to us by our elders. While we didn’t always agree on things, we did share a deep belief in the view that our Pacific indigenous languages carry our history and values as peoples of the Pacific and that these languages can still touch deeply the hearts and souls of our people. Our last conversation was about ensuring that we remember this gift from our ancestors and that we utilise it in the manner captured in the word *matāfaioi*, a Samoan word used to describe a Samoan understanding of responsibility.

In thinking about the theme of your conference I want to come to it through a Samoan phrase that speaks about the relationship between rights and responsibilities: *“O le matāfaioi le maluāpapa o le aiā tatau”*. It is also the title of my address. In English I translate this as: “Human responsibility is the foundation rock of human rights”. In order to manage cultural and religious diversity in the Pacific I believe that one must first find a language which can speak to the hearts and souls of those who live in the Pacific, and do so in spite of their religious or cultural differences.

Language is a wonderfully complex yet critical part of our humanity. Language is more than just words; it is everything and anything that communicates or gives meaning and identity. It is both tool and philosophy; a means and an end. To find a language that can speak to that part of us that makes us all human, that part that connects our sense of morality, regardless of

our religious differences or cultural idiosyncrasies, is to find a language that touches the soul; a language that can speak without speaking.

In preparing for this address I came across the work of Professor Hans Kung on “A Global Ethic and Human Responsibilities”¹. In talking about the inextricable connection between human rights and responsibilities, Kung cites Mahatma Ghandi’s profound words given to the United Nations consultation party when they consulted him on the Declaration of Human Rights. He said: “The Ganges of rights originates in the Himalayan of responsibilities”.²

Even if you have never touched the river Ganga or climbed the Himalayans, the message is profound. In order for the profoundness of those words to take hold, you do, however, need to know that “the Ganges” refers to the Ganga river that has social, cultural, religious and economic significance for Indian people, especially the Hindus, and that “the Himalayan” refers to the mountains that hold the glaciers that feed the Ganges.

If you will indulge me, I wish to explore the “Ganges of rights” and the “Himalayan of responsibilities” with respect to the languages, cultures and religions of traditional and contemporary Samoa. To do so I first offer an explanation of the meanings usually associated with the concepts *matāfaioi*, *maluāpapa* and *aiā tatau*. This is followed by a brief discussion of how these concepts might be read in the languaging of rights and responsibilities by the Samoan Courts, using the 2003 case of *Lafaialii v Attorney General* as an example. I end with some reflections on the challenges of managing cultural and religious diversity in an increasingly pluralist Samoa.

Let me turn now to what I mean by *matāfaioi*.

Matāfaioi

George Pratt’s 19th century Samoan-English language dictionary is commonly referred to by scholars and lay people as a key source for finding early usages of Samoan terms.³ Interestingly it does not record the terms *matāfaioi* or responsibility. What it does record is the term *matāfai*. Pratt translates this term into English to mean two things: 1. “the side of

¹ Kung, H. (2005). There are no specific page numbers for the electronic version of this paper, which is cited in the reference list.

² Ibid.

³ Published in 1862 by the London Missionary Society. See online version cited in reference list.

the plantation from which the taro is being pulled up“, and 2. “old people likely to die first”.⁴ It is the first meaning that resonates with my understanding and with current usage of the term *matāfai* in *matāfai oi*.

Breaking terms down into component parts is a useful exercise for uncovering some of their deeper meanings. The term *matāfai oi* separates into two: *matāfai* and *oi*. As hinted at by Pratt the term *matāfai* is understood by Samoans today to refer to the use of land and that that use involves mainly the planting and harvesting of food crops such as taro. This harvesting aspect is made explicit in the word *faamatāfai*, which means harvesting one’s crops from the land one was apportioned or directed to work on.

In traditional times the planting of crops was done by all within the family. When ready to harvest the *matai* of the family would say “*ia, o le a faamatāfai le maumaga*”, meaning “okay, we will now harvest in designated portions or land lots the crops of our plantation”. All this points to an interpretation of *matāfai oi* as including the act of (1) directing a person to take responsibility for working a portion of land, and (2) the act of taking up that responsibility and fulfilling it well. The *oi* at the end of the term *matāfai oi* suggests an element of pain in these acts.

Oi can be an exclamation or cry of pain or surprise (as in the English idioms used by Pratt to translate *oi*: i.e. “Alas! [or] Oh!”), or it can be a verb meaning “to touch; to cut down...” as in the phrases “*oia le vao*” (clear the trees by cutting) or “*oia le eleele*” (clear the land by cutting).⁵ The *oi* in *matāfai oi* seeks to remind the articulator that in order to harvest their portion they must take responsibility to work the land properly through sweat and pain – metaphors for hard work and struggle – and if this is done and done well they will be rewarded. The moral value that one will be blessed if one is responsible and works hard and faithfully is active in the word *matāfai oi*. It is a value present also in the biblical parable about talents found in Matthew 25.

In the Samoan indigenous religious reference God as a progenitor God gave life to land and imbued in her a responsibility to grow and bear fruit. A similar responsibility was imposed on us as humans to respect and protect land. We share a *feagaiga* or sacred covenant with the

⁴ Pratt, p.150.

⁵ Ibid, p.91.

land and all other livings things. When we abuse the land, the sacred bond or *feagaiga* between us is compromised. To language this breach of *feagaiga* in terms of rights and responsibilities between us and the land, we might say that when we abuse our right to take from the land then her responsibility to shelter, feed and sustain us well is compromised. If we do not fulfil our responsibility to protect and nurture her, she has the right to refuse to yield to our demands. Abuse of land as a sacred gift from God is thus an abuse of God's love and of our *feagaiga* with Him. With true remorse and forgiveness harmony in our sacred relationship or *va tapuia* (that between us and the land) can be restored. Our responsibility or *matāfaioi* is to look after our relationships and gifts from God; to nurture them and let them flourish. Such a responsibility comes with blessings if treated well, or with misfortune if not.

When unpacking *matāfaioi* in this way we bring alive our Samoan indigenous theological principles, much of which lays dormant in our imaginations, only surfacing during those moments when we decide to revive words such as those used in our funeral rituals, as for example, when we recite the sixth stanza of our creation chant and pay tribute to the sixth heaven, our ancestor the land/earth, and say: "*Tulouna le lagi tuaono! Tulouna le 'ele'ele*"! (Salutations to the sixth heaven! Salutations to the earth!).

Matāfaioi as the "sweat of our labour" implies a dedication and commitment to even the smallest acts of responsibility. In faithfully carrying out our *matāfaioi* or responsibilities, we pay tribute to the wisdom, grace and mercy of God. In our pursuit of this kind of responsibility or *matāfaioi*, the words of the irrepressible Shakespeare rings true. He says: "The quality of mercy is not strain'd, / It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven/ Upon the place beneath. It is twice blest: / It blesseth him that gives and him that takes."⁶

The strength (or *maluāpapa*) of our responsibilities or *matāfaioi* is our belief in what is good, merciful and just about our works and our God. I turn now to a discussion on the meaning of *maluāpapa*.

Maluāpapa

Like *matāfaioi* the term *maluāpapa* can be divided into two main parts: *malu* and *papa*. The "a" in between the *malu* and *papa* is a preposition. It signals a relationship between the two

⁶ *The Merchant of Venice Act 4, scene 1, 180-187*. Online at: http://www.shakespeare-literature.com/The_Merchant_of_Venice/18.html. (Accessed 13 April 2012).

terms. In common Samoan usage today *malu* refers to the idea of protection, shelter or refuge. *Papa* refers to a rock. *Maluāpapa* is, therefore, as Pratt records it, “a sheltering rock”.⁷

Pratt, who spent a lot of his time in Samoa at the place Mālua (today the location of the E.F.K.S. church theological college), also records the term *mālua* and says that it means “a hole in the reef”.⁸ Fish, such as moray eels, are known to take refuge and live in these holes. Naming the place Mālua after the image of a gap or opening where people can find refuge from harm is a reasonable interpretation. The geography of Mālua (located on the north-western coast of Upolu) finds it at the site of an *ava* or opening in the reef where boats gain safe passage in and out.⁹ It is also said by some associated with the village that it derives its name from the term *maluāpapa*.

I have been told by Oka’s family that this is indeed the case. I wish to retell their story of the origins of the name because their version offers insights into how the events of our lives, past and present, and of our surroundings, enfold themselves in our imaginations, come out in our words, and form our languages.

Oka shared with his children a story about Malietoa Faiga, who was a cannibal. Malietoa Faiga indulged in what is known in Samoan as *aso*, which in literal terms means “day” or “daily” but actually refers to the daily ritual of making a human food offering, mainly of children, to him for his consumption. Families in the district used to take turns. By chance Malietoa’s son came across the grief stricken parents of the child who was to be offered next. The son took pity on them and said: “Do not grieve anymore, I offer myself to my father in substitute for your son. Go to that young coconut tree that is close by and fetch me a palm and you can help me wrap myself ready for presentation”. Overjoyed the family did so. They broke off a palm from the tree in the Samoan style of *fatitu*, (literally meaning, “to break off while standing”). Once the leaves of the palm were braided (*filiga*) all around him the family carried the son of Malietoa to Malietoa’s residence in Malie and made their ritual offering to their Liege Lord.

⁷ Pratt, p.145.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Pratt, p.85.

The story goes on that when the *filiga* was opened and Malietoa saw that it was his son, he was not only surprised but deeply moved. In that moment he realised the suffering his indulgences imposed on his people and thereupon decided to abolish the *aso*.

Meanwhile, expecting that Malietoa would be provoked into anger by their act of deception, the child who was supposed to have been offered to Malietoa and his parents went into hiding in one of the Mālua rock caves. The King's emissaries found them in the caves and told them they need not hide anymore because Malietoa had abolished the *aso*. The shelter provided by the rock caves of Mālua to the child and his parents, the good news brought to them in the caves by the King's emissaries and the heroic strength of Malietoa's son, all lend meaning to the significance of the name Mālua and the term *maluāpapa*. The current naming of the Mālua Theological College Newsletter, "*I'u leo o le Maluapapa*" ("The message from the Last Intonation of Maluapapa") seems to affirm this.¹⁰

The deep significance of *malu* to Samoan culture is also felt when examining not only its use alongside the term *paolo* in the saying, "*O le paolo e malu ai le aiga*" (literally meaning, "the shade that provides shelter for the family"), but also its use as the name for the female *tatau* or tattoo, the *malu*.

The saying "*O le paolo e malu ai le aiga*" refers to the love and protection offered by a wife's or husband's family to his or her new family in their times of need. In traditional times when a wife moved to live with her husband's family or the husband moved to live with his wife's family, when strife occurred in their household or a burden was heavily felt they could seek relief and comfort from the *paolo* (or "in-laws"). Although most times *paolo* assumed this responsibility, sometimes – mainly in times of war – it was actively sought. The power of the saying lies in the reality of life in Samoa where because the heat of the tropical sun is so unbearable at its peak, finding shade gives great relief and comfort. This saying nuances the role of marriage in traditional Samoa. The responsibility of the *paolo* to give shelter as "in-laws" to the burdened family indicates a role and responsibility that is assumed upon marriage.

¹⁰ They do not use diacritics in the title of their newsletter. The newsletter can be found online at: <http://www.malua.edu.ws/Portals/164/Maluapapa%20Files/MALUAPAPA%20MAY%202011%20-%20Issue%20XXV.pdf>. (Accessed 13 April 2012).

When families join through the bonds of marriage they take on for the duration of the marriage a sacred responsibility, a *feagaiga* or covenant, to give shelter, comfort and relief to each other during times of stress or burden. In contemporary Samoa the responsibility of *paolo* to give shelter is most visible for families at events such as family weddings or funerals, however, the responsibility is always there, even if less visible to the public eye.

The protection of the female *tatau* is even more removed from the public eye. Unlike the male *pe'a* or *tatau*, the female *malu*, as the name suggests, is about sheltering or protecting. What is being protected by the *malu* is the womb, the place where life forms, is nurtured and is then brought into the world. The *pe'a* mimics the hanging of the bat and draws reference to its fecundity. For the female the *malu* marks only the thighs. This focus recognises the role of the thighs as protectors of the opening, the *ava* or passage way, necessary for fertilisation and reproduction. It recognises the spiritual significance of the womb as *vaevae manava* – the place where the mother shares her life breath with her unborn child until birth.

The *pe'a* and the *malu* together draw on Samoan indigenous understandings of male and female roles and responsibilities in reproduction. To gain a *malu* or a *pe'a* the recipients must endure significant pain and suffering. This is captured in the saying: “*a e mana'o i le tatau, talia tigā*” (literally, if you want a *tatau* or traditional tattoo, you need to bear the suffering). Essentially this is the message of the cross, of growing, of becoming, of achieving, and of being. The marks of the traditional Samoan *malu* implant on the female thighs the spiritual significance of women as the protectors and life-blood of our family genealogies.

After witnessing the filming by her husband of a Samoan *tatau* in 1925, Robert Flaherty's wife is recorded as saying that: “[Samoan] tattooing is the beautification of the body by a race who, without metals, without clay, express their feelings for beauty in the perfection of their own glorious bodies. Deeper than that, however, is its spring in a common human need, the need for struggle and for some test of endurance, some supreme mark of individual worth and proof of the quality of the man...What is it that can keep alive the spirit of man but his own respect for what he is – the God that is within him? And so it is that tattooing stands for valor and courage and all those qualities in which man takes pride”.¹¹

¹¹ See her comments as recorded by P J Reece on his website page titled ‘Ancient tattoos: theories of heaven and earth’, found online at: http://www.vanishingtattoo.com/ancient_tattoos_3.htm. (Accessed 13 April 2012).

When the *pe'a* or *malu* is worn today, even if the wearer is not aware of its cultural history, the names carry with it these meanings. So it is when we use the term *papa* or rock in the name *maluāpapa*.

What the term *papa* carries when added to the term *malu(ā)* is the significance of our indigenous creation beliefs to our Samoan indigenous history and religion. Like *matāfai* and the female *malu*, *papa* when understood as “the rock” gives the image not only of something strong and steadfast, as something that gives shelter, but also of something spawned by God. In Samoa, as with most of the Pacific Islands, the lands we now inhabit began as volcanic rock. When Samoans first made fire it was by rubbing together small rocks. The energy and warmth produced by this fire added fuel to the Samoan religious thesis that God was God progenitor. Again this belief is evidenced in our early chants where we salute in our funeral chants the place of the rock in our order of creation: “*Tulouna le lagi tuafitu! Tulouna le papatu!*” (Salutations to the seventh heaven! Salutations to the standing rock!).¹²

In deconstructing words such as *maluāpapa* and *matāfai* in this way we can gain a wealth of information that is nuanced. It is in capturing the motivational essence of these nuances that we can touch those parts of ourselves that actually moves our words into action.

Before moving to the *Lafaialii* case, it is instructive to say a few words about the Samoan nuances of the term “rights” or *aiā tatau*. Let me now turn to these.

Aiā Tatau

The coupling of *aiā* with *tatau* to form *aiā tatau* meaning “rights” is relatively recent and seems to have occurred in response to contemporary debates on human rights. The coiners have taken the term *aiā*, which refers to the idea of an entitlement or authority, and joined it with the term *tatau* meaning “rightful”, presumably to give *aiā* a proactive emphasis.

In common parlance we may hear someone saying in Samoan: “*e leai sau feau, e leai sau aiā ia te a'u*”, literally meaning “you have no business, no authority over me”. Interestingly

¹² See Tui Atua, T.T.T.E. (2009), p.155.

Pratt records the term *aiā* as a verb referring to having no authority. He says that it is a term “mostly preceded by a negative”, as in the manner suggested.¹³ The recent coupling of *aiā* with *tatau* to give a more positive, proactive emphasis upfront then makes sense.

When my elders spoke of rights they would associate it with terms that described our portions or entitlements from God. For example, they would say “*O lau mea totino lena*” (literally, “that is yours exclusively”), or “*O lou tofi lena*” (literally, “that is your portion”) or “*O lou faasinomaga*” (literally, “that is your inheritance”). The notion of rights was assumed in these sayings. The assumption was that as children of God our rights are gifted to us by God and come with responsibilities. Like the Indians, rights and responsibilities operate in tandem. Not in competition. To think of rights as exclusive or separate from responsibility and from God is to cut the cultural and religious umbilical cord that joins, feeds and sustains what it is that is Samoan in the minds, hearts and souls of Samoans.

Today in Samoa, and the Pacific more generally, we still utter many words that stem from our ancient histories and cultures, many of which still impact profoundly on our minds, hearts and souls. Unfortunately, in our rush to become modern or globally relevant the full magic of many of these words are lost. At moments of crisis we need to be able to use words that can soothe, inform, connect, motivate, and heal us. We need to activate the *matāfaioi* (or duty/responsibility) within us, that is the sheltering rock (or *maluāpapa*) of our rights (or *aiā tatau*), so that our discussions on how best to manage cultural and religious diversity can be energised by the fullness of our thoughts, our words and our actions.

I wish to briefly reflect now on the case of *Lafaialii vs. Attorney General*¹⁴, on what it might say about *matāfaioi*, *maluāpapa* and *aiā tatau* in the language of the Courts.

Lafaialii vs. Attorney General of Samoa

The *Lafaialii* case is a case about freedom of religion in Samoa. To establish the facts of the case and offer insight into the language of the courts, I recite some key passages from Chief Justice Sapolu’s decision. I begin with some of the facts as told by the Chief Justice, then paraphrase in the interests of time. He states:

¹³ Pratt, p.74.

¹⁴ [2003] WSSC 8 (24 April 2003).

“The plaintiffs or nearly all of them are villagers of the village of Falealupo. They are also members of a bible class that was established at Falealupo in 1980 with permission from the Alii and Faipule which is the village council or governing body of the village. As the membership of the bible class continued to increase in numbers, the plaintiffs extended their activities from weekly bible studies to religious services on Sundays. This offended the Alii and Faipule as they had given permission to the bible class for weekly bible studies only and not for religious services on Sundays. The bible class was therefore instructed to cease its Sunday services but several of its leaders did not heed that instruction and were fined by the Alii and Faipule. All, except four, paid their fines. As a consequence the Alii and Faipule petitioned the Land and Titles Court for an order to banish from Falealupo the four leaders of the bible class who did not pay their fines. The Land and Titles Court granted the petition by the Alii and Faipule and issued the banishment order sought. However a reconciliation took place between the Alii and Faipule and the bible class and the banishment order was not carried out. The bible class was allowed to continue within the village and its membership continued to increase in numbers.”¹⁵

This reconciliation, however, broke in 1999, nineteen years later, when (I quote) “the Alii and Faipule [issued] a public notice which prohibited members of other villages from continuing to attend the bible class at Falealupo” (end quote).¹⁶ This led to a number of ongoing conflicts which in 2002 culminated in the bible class, represented by the plaintiffs, taking a case before the Supreme Court alleging breach of their constitutional right under article 11(1) to the freedom “either alone or in a community with others, and in public or private, to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance”. The significant events between 1999 and January 2002 as I read them included (in no order of priority):

- The refusal by the bible class to accept the village invitation to participate in songs and dances for the Falealupo combined religious denominational service organised as part of the millennium celebrations on the grounds that it was against their religious convictions.
- The public condemnation delivered by the pastor who presided over the millennium service at his Sunday sermon.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

- The Alii and Faipule decision “to dismantle the building in which the plaintiffs and members of the bible class held their bible studies and Sunday services”.
- The Alii and Faipule members, together with a number of untitled men of the village, actually dismantling the said building.
- The Alii and Faipule banishing from Falealupo four of the families who attended the bible class and threatening to burn their properties if they didn’t leave Falealupo.
- Members of the Alii and Faipule and others of the village actually going to the house of Tapu Aeau Lafaialii, loading his family’s possessions onto a truck and driving Tapu, his wife and children to the Salelologa wharf and making sure they got onto the ferry to Apia.

The legal issue before the Supreme Court was whether Lafaialii and his co-plaintiffs’ right to freedom of religion, as enshrined under Article 11 of Samoa’s Constitution, the supreme law of Samoa today, was breached by the actions of the Alii and Faipule (among others) of the village of Falealupo. The moral issue is whether the decisions and actions of the plaintiffs (the bible class members) and the defendants (the Alii and Faipule in particular) were ethical, just and protective of public or village order and general welfare.¹⁷ Were they reflective of a responsible character – one concerned for doing what is right; for seeking peace and avoiding harm; for prioritising and demonstrating diligence, fairness and tolerance?

Hans Kung reminds us that law must have a moral foundation. He says: “There is no disputing the fact that ‘the rule of law and the promotion of human rights depend on the readiness of men and women to act justly’”.¹⁸ Professor Rex Tauati Adhar, in an academic paper on freedom of religion in Samoa,¹⁹ concurs and states that the scope of the right of religious freedom in Samoa depends on a number of variables and questions. One overarching question, he raises, is whether judges in Samoa “approach their task from a ‘conservative’ or ‘progressive’ standpoint? ... [Do] they lean more towards communal, traditional, *fa’a Samoa* (sic) values or to Western, individualistic values?”²⁰

¹⁷ The words “public order and general welfare” was taken from Article 29 of the Declaration of Human Rights which refers to the “duties of everyone towards the community”, as cited in Hans Kung (2005).

¹⁸ See Kung (2005).

¹⁹ Adhar (2011).

²⁰ Ibid, p.18.

The Chief Justice, in deciding the case, drew on legal precedents from within Samoa and from overseas, from Canada and Australia in particular. His decision sought to balance the requirements of the Constitution with the requirements of customary law. His balancing act came out on the side of the Constitution. In his decision he is, however, sensitive to the realities of village life but infers – from a progressive standpoint perhaps – that in Samoa’s context today cultural and religious diversity is, if not now then will become, the norm rather than the exception. As such he makes a plea for tolerance. His words are worth quoting in full:

“Inherent in the concept of freedom of religion enshrined in the Constitution is *tolerance*, the ability to understand and accept the fact that not all people would hold and subscribe to the same religious beliefs even if they are all Christians. One must *learn to tolerate* and respect the religious beliefs of others even though such beliefs may be different from one’s own religious beliefs. In this way peace, harmony and stability will remain and continue in village societies. This will no doubt require some adjustment in the attitudes of some of the Alii and Faipule and some of the pastors of the mainline churches which is something that should not be beyond their capacities to achieve. After all the world is never at a standstill; it is always turning. And survival and growth in society involve the ability to adjust and adapt to new legitimate situations and ideas which arise from time to time in life. History has also shown that the persecution of people because of their religious beliefs had never succeeded in changing such beliefs but had only resulted in immense and undesirable misery, hardship and suffering.”²¹

The Chief Justice’s words have attracted international attention. Kirsty Ruddock of North Queensland has written that in reference to this case: “The Samoan judiciary has sought to resolve this conflict [between Constitutional rights and customary law, i.e. village fono rights] by ensuring that the concept of freedom of religion has been interpreted in a way to promote tolerance and understanding of difference, even if this forces changes to customary law”.²² Circulating within the Chief Justice’s idea of tolerance and Kirsty’s support of his “progressive” interpretations are pleas to find words that can touch those parts of ourselves that gives us self-respect and motivates a desire to recognise “the responsibility” within “the right”.

²¹ Sapolu C.J. at supra fn.14.
²² Ruddock, K. (2004).

What Ahdar alluded to earlier is the human element in interpreting law, interpreting our rights and responsibilities: the same human element that exists in any process for managing cultural and religious diversity. Acknowledging this element means acknowledging that the relational lines or boundaries (*tuāoi*) drawn between, for example, the right to freedom of religion on the one hand, and the responsibility to ensure peace and harmony on the other, are not always clear-cut. They are sometimes blurred by the messiness of human life. The challenge to sorting through this messiness is finding the humility to admit when our decision making is more about power and self-glory than about love and justice.

In the highest grossing Turkish film of 2010 called *Five Minarets in New York*, Director Mahsun Kirmizigul offers a compelling story about a Turkish Muslim man named Hadji Gumus. (Hadji is an honorific given to Muslims who have made a pilgrimage). Hadji Gumus was believed by Turkish authorities to be a dangerous Islamic leader. When he was a young boy growing up in Turkey his brother shot a man in broad daylight and forced the murder weapon upon him. Gumus wrongfully served time for the murder in a Turkish prison. He never once condemned his brother. After being released from prison Gumus fled to the United States of America where he built a life for himself as a well-respected Muslim scholar and family man.²³ Through Hadji Gumus's life – from his relationship with his Catholic wife, his daughter, his mother, his American Muslim friends, through to his impact on the Turkish policeman who sought revenge for the death of his father and on the Islamic terrorists that Hadji Gumus meets while in a police holding cell – Kirmizigul, as a Turkish man himself, prods us, through the spoken and unspoken, to think about the cultural and religious ironies, tensions and prejudices that exist within our own communities.

Like *Lafaialii's* case, *Five Minarets in New York* forces us to ask some tough questions about the societies we live in today. It forces us to delve deeply into our hearts to find what it is that could best help us search for the tolerance pleaded for by the Chief Justice Sapolu. It forces us to recognise that there exists a paranoia that can corrupt our souls to the extent that in our hate, indifference or lust for revenge or power, what is right or wrong, innocent or guilty, will matter little. And it forces us to recognise that none of us is immune to this paranoia. However, through Hadji Gumus, Kirmizigul, suggests that the antidote must always

²³ Taken from the description or plot of the film noted and uploaded online at: <http://iwatchfilm.com/country/turkey-produced-movies/> and signed anonymous.

be having ever-present an openness to learning and searching for God's humility and compassion; an openness to education, grace, mercy and self-less giving.

The language of the Supreme Court is necessarily legalistic and technical. But it is also moral and always in search of justice. The words of the Chief Justice intimate a natural struggle to balance a responsibility to the rule of law and to the customs and the hearts of his people. The *matāfaioi* of his Court is to ensure that their words and actions speak to the hearts and minds of those who come before it. In finding that language, the true language of tolerance, or in Samoan we might say the true spirit of *faapalepale*, they and we will then find the path to the sheltering rock, the *maluāpapa*, that can protect both our rights and responsibilities.

Conclusion

To end my very exploratory journey through the nuances, realities, tensions and joys of languaging our rights or *aiā tatau*, responsibilities or *matāfaioi*, and sheltering rocks or *maluāpapa*, I make three short points that imply the challenges I see for our increasingly pluralist societies.

First, I agree with Hans Kung, that: "There will be no survival of our globe without a global ethic."; "There will be no peace among the nations without peace among the religions."; and "There will be no peace among the religions without dialogue and cooperation among the religions and civilizations."²⁴ This is as much true for the village as it is for the world.

Secondly, I agree with the Iron Lady: "Watch your thoughts because they become words. Watch your words because they become actions. Watch your actions because they become habits. Watch your habits because they become your character. And, watch your character because it becomes your destiny!"²⁵

And last but by no means least, I agree that we need the miraculous power of God to be present within us as we dialogue on how best to manage cultural and religious diversity in our

²⁴ Kung (2005).

²⁵ See these words from the 2012 biopic film about former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher played by Meryl Streep online at: <http://www.ranker.com/list/the-iron-lady-movie-quotes/movie-and-tv-quotes>. (Accessed 13 April 2012).

region. I agree with the words of Reverend Ronald Rolheiser, which were republished in our Samoan Observer as part of its Easter message: “The miraculous doesn’t force itself on us. It’s there, there to be seen, but whether we see or not, and what precisely we do see, depends mainly on what’s going on inside our hearts”.²⁶ Let us, as Oka would say, ensure that there is ever-present a *laolao*, an opening, within our hearts for the miracles of God.

God bless. Soifua.

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²⁶ The article with this quote was in the New Zealand Herald on Thursday 5 April 2012. It was titled ‘An Easter Message: rising hope’ by Rev Dr Neville Bartle and others. It was republished in the Samoan Observer in their Easter Friday issue. For the quote by Rev Ronald Rolheiser see online version of the article at: http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10796782. (Accessed 13 April 2012).