If there is no LAW in the world, what happens? Obviously, LAW is present to guide behaviour because people do not expect people to do the right things and not do the wrong things if left to their own devices.

My next question: Has LAW served its purpose?

There are LAWS aplenty, national or international, but the chaos in the world and the lack of peace or ethical behaviours at home give the impression that LAWS have been enacted to be broken. By LAW, the breaking of LAWS should invite punishments. Yet, the LAW that prescribes punishments for the breaking of LAWS is itself often found to be impotent against LAW-breakers (whether individuals or entities). Those who get punished and learnt their lessons to be obedient to the man-made LAWS are the "unfortunate" ones ("unfortunate" in the unhappy sense to themselves that they are "luckless" to get caught and have no protection against being taken to task).

There are three types of people: (1) Those who would listen to the LAW, (2) Those who would not listen to the LAW and (3) Those who would do the right things without the LAW to compel them.

Consider a LAW that says: "Thou shalt flush the public toilet after every use!"

- The Type 1 people would diligently flush the toilet after every use even if no one is watching, since "the LAW says that I should; and I don't want to be punished in the event that I get caught for not flushing."

- The Type 2 people would only bother to make sure that no one is watching when they scoot off without flushing (for fear of the dirty flushing handle).

- The Type 3 people would instinctively flush the toilet after every use, with or without the LAW, because it is ingrained in their hearts that

flushing to maintain cleanliness of the toilet for the next user is just the LOVING thing to do.

Arrh … the thing called LOVE, a commodity so scarce that without LAWS most people can't be expected to behave right; yet, with LAWS, people would try all means to circumvent them if they can be "fortunate" enough to escape being caught or to avoid punishments somehow.

If we can inculcate LOVE, then we can do away with LAWS. Fact is that no matter how hard we try to inculcate LOVE, there will be those resistant to "LOVING others as they LOVE themselves" (to avoid doing what they would not want others do); so, WE NEED LAWS!

After saying that WE NEED LAWS, I must add that the presence of LAWS to guide or compel behaviours is itself inadequate to serve the purpose of maintaining ethics if there is no LOVE.

Inculcating LOVE is doing an action. LOVE itself is not an action, but a quality in our heart that can motivate the willing for spontaneous right behaviour without external compulsion.

Building up an assortment of LAWS is an action that is not immune to ethical errors, as evident by the cacophony of voices defending and attacking the LAWS. We hardly hear voices saying that LOVE is wrong, but we hear a lot about LAWS being right or wrong.

Even if granted that we cannot do without LAWS, do you personally prefer to see LOVE at work or LAW at work if there is a choice between the two?

1) On the MRT train, you are in need and someone stands up and offers his seat to you out of LOVE as there is no LAW to compel him. You accept the loving offer. You are appreciative and the person who makes the offer of seat is also happy for doing a good deed.

2) On the MRT train, you are an able-bodied chap and a pregnant lady stands in front of you. You immediately jump up from your seat because there is a LAW that says the seat is reserved for pregnant women and if you don't give it up, you will be liable to a fine. Will you and the other person enjoy the same feel-good factor as in the scenario (1) above?

☹Interestingly, I had heard calls by people for the authority to make "reserved seats" compulsory. I have a better suggestion: The government should enact a LAW that makes LOVE compulsory; and any act that can be proven by a

public prosecutor as a non-loving act makes the culprit liable to be punished. ☺ LOVE CONQUERS ALL!

While LAW is important in the context of man's sinful condition, it is clear to me that LOVE is more important. Human LAWS are man-made LAWS to lead human behaviours according to the will of human authorities. God's LAW is divine LAW set down according to God's will on the behaviours of His creation.

The superiority of LOVE over LAW is borne out by Scripture:

- The first and greatest commandment is about LOVE, not about LAW. (Matt. 22:37-38)
- The second greatest commandment is about LOVE, not about LAW. (Matt. 22:39)
- All the LAW and the Prophets hang on the above two commandments on LOVE. (Matt. 22:40) Note that it is not the opposite, that LOVE hangs on the LAW and the Prophets.
- The Bible says, "God is LOVE" (1 John 4:8) instead of "God is LAW".

There are different ways in which we can desist from robbing our neighbour, or desist from disobeying God's LAW:

- We do not rob our neighbours because we fear being punished, or we do not rob because we don't wish our neighbours to rob us. (We LOVE them as we LOVE ourselves and we don't wish to bring suffering upon them as we won't want similar suffering upon ourselves.)

- We fulfil God's LAW because the obedience is the normal outcome of our LOVE for God, or we intentionally obey the LAW out of fear.

I notice that people mostly do the right acts if there is LOVE. However, they have much tendency to do the wrong acts if there is LAW but LOVE is absent. The chaos in the world can be traced to an absence of LOVE (with an abundance of selfish interests), not to an absence of LAWS governing individuals' or countries' behaviours.

In Rom. 12:2, Apostle Paul tells us "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."

The pattern of this world is inclined towards more and more LAWS, and towards ways and means to circumvent LAWS. Sometimes, LAWS are badly

formulated and abused. At other times, LAWS are easily evaded with sham excuses. It does not take much to conceive the higher priority given to calling for more LAWS, about punishing other LAW-breakers and being self-adroit at ways to break through gaps in the LAWS. We tend to hear more about rules and regulations. We hear less preaching about transforming and renewing our mind, about switching to the channel of LOVE, or about being pleasing to our neighbours as we wish for them to be pleasing to us if not to get to know God's pleasing will.

What did Jesus mean by "Not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the LAW until everything is accomplished"? (Matt. 5:18)

In brief, the answer is that the LAW is very important, not to be annulled but to be fulfilled. Nevertheless, what is still more important is not the obedience to the LAW but the attitude that springs from the heart. See these that Jesus said in continuation:

- "You have heard that … 'You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. (Matt. 5:21-22)

- "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. (Matt. 5:27-28)

You can read more "You have heard … But …" kinds of instructions from the Lord in Matt. 5:31-32; 33-34; 38-42; 43-44; etc.)

Just like Jesus' fulfilment of the LAW or the Prophets (Matt.5:17) sprang from the Father's LOVE, our obedience to the moral LAWS ought to be also founded on the LOVE that springs from the heart instead of being based on a methodical conformity with the letter of the LAW. For example, you do not litter because you LOVE the environment and know that it is wrong to litter, not because the LAW says so whereby when you are outside the jurisdiction of the LAW you feel free to litter without compunction since you would not be breaking any LAW then.

"For the LAW always brings punishment on those who try to obey it. (The only way to avoid breaking the LAW is to have no LAW to break!)" – Rom. 4:5 (NLT)

If there is LOVE and no LAW, there would be fulfilment of all things right as man acts on unselfishness by the principles of Jesus' commandments.

If there is LAW and no LOVE, man's actions in methodical conformity with the letters of the LAW would not fulfil all things right in the eyes of God, as the various "You have heard that it was said … but I tell you …" instructions from Jesus clearly tell.

Peace is elusive because there is not enough LOVE, not because there are not enough LAWS.

If preaching and practising more LOVE is difficult or hopeless for peace, how is preaching and practising more LAWS and punishments easier and more hopeful?

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