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High School Division 2018

1<sup>st</sup> Place Winner

Woodward Academy

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### Imago Dei

There are 7.5 billion people in the world. All of them are different from me for reasons as large as race, religion, nationality, age and gender, and as small as the order of nucleotides on a DNA strand. It can be overwhelming to think about all the various ways that people are different from me. In today's climate of political correctness, I am almost guaranteed to be guilty of excluding, marginalizing, or insulting anyone who is not exactly just like me with what I say and do. Differences are what set people apart from each other, and fear of what is different can make us not want to associate with others who are not the same as us. I can show integrity towards people who aren't like me by first realizing what we are all made imago Dei, in the "image of God".

As secular or non-Judeo Christian worldview cannot logically see this fear of differences as a problem or have a reason to treat anyone, let alone that who are different from them, with integrity. Their worldview precludes placing an intrinsic value on human life. There are those who think the origin of Life began with simple chemicals becoming proteins that accidently evolved from simple cells as humans. To them, humans have no particular reason to live or exist, and have no inherent value. They don't believe in Life having eternal value either because their worldview doesn't need a Creator, an objective Moral Law Giver. For them, Life has no intrinsic or eternal value based on an authority outside of man's subjective opinion. Arbitrary opinion is what determines their definition of integrity. Man, not God, determined what is right and what is wrong. How can one man define integrity let alone tell another man how to relate with integrity towards those who are different from them when their opinion is subject to change by time, culture, and circumstances. It's only a Judeo Christian worldview that gives an intellectually honest definition and meaning to the word integrity because it does believe in a Creator.

"Love your neighbor as yourself" and "So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them," are verses that teach me as a Christian that I should have a desire and need to treat everyone with an equal amount of integrity. All people were created in the image of God and reflect and possess inherent dignity, moral worth and eternal value because of this. This idea lived out as an absolute truth demands my actions towards everyone match what I think and say as a Christian. That requires me treating with patience, kindness, loving, honesty, humility, and respect people who aren't just the same as I am, but those who are different as well.