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ENGL 106i

25 Feb 2015

The Influence of Christian Church Functions on International Students

Since a lot of international students came to the US for the first time, they are interested in learning more about American people’s life style. We all know that going to churches is an important part of American people’s life. A Christian church can be attractive to international students with the motivation of getting involved to the local life. In Purdue University, there is a large amount of international students who have the experience of going to the church for either a long or a short period of time. Among those students, I found that Chinese students, most of who do not have religion backgrounds are especially interested in Christian churches. Also, I have the similar personal experiences. So, my study aims to find out how Chinese students become familiar with church functions and how churches affect Chinese students at Purdue University in social and academic life.

It is common that international students studying at US academic institutions are eager to gain new experiences, get involved and learn about the local culture. This explains why the fellowships of Christian churches are appealing to international students, especially students from China. Since many Chinese students have limit knowledge about Christianity and American culture, they often do not know about the ways religion works on people; they are curious about churches and are active to attend the events held by fellowships, such as Bible study. The reason for Chinese students without religion backgrounds to go to the Christian churches is that they see Christianity as a significant cultural difference that is worth studying. So, I think it is interesting to learn how Chinese students become familiar with church functions.

Additionally, my personal experiences of going to a Chinese church also drives me to study about how churches affect Chinese students in social and academic life. As a new student in Purdue University, I was guided and helped by a Chinese upper class man before the start of the spring semester and he also invited to go to the Greater Lafayette Chinese Alliance Church. I was more than happy to accept the invitation, because I think I can make a lot of new friends and get familiar with local people there. Actually this idea was proved when the first time I came to the church and met a bunch of warm-hearted and friendly Christians. I felt happy singing and talking with them, however, I still had some concerns about people who have religions. I had a misconception that people in the church would keep forcing me to believe in god. As I get closer to my friends in the Chinese church, I found that they didn’t do what I had expected. They are a group of people who enjoy meeting new friends and offering help. Since the Chinese students I met in the church share the good characteristics of friendly and warm-hearted, I think churches can change and affect Chinese students on their social life significantly.

Since I enjoyed going to the church, I also attended the Bible study on Sunday morning. After a month, I started to know about the history and the main thoughts of Christianity meanwhile met more Chinese friends. I was surprised to realize that most of them are the top students who did excellent jobs on their academic life. There are several undergraduate students, whether they are Christians or not yet, who have double or triple majors, also quite a few graduate students and master degree students are getting a GPA of 4.0 and annual assistantships. I think that there should be some connections between their success in their study and the church functions. Although I believe that the stimulation of other excellent around those Chinese students going to the church may affect them to work harder and get high grades, it’s still important to know that what aspect of churches functions exactly influenced the Chinese students to be successful in their academic life.

From my perspective, there are several assumptions about this question. Firstly, since all of the Christian churches teach Bible, the Bible can obviously influence the Chinese students going to the church. However, I don’t think the content of Bible is the most important reason that led to Chinese students’ success. Because not all Christian students are good at their studies. Secondly, the church provided students a place to think about themselves, thus, they are more likely to overcome their weaknesses. For instance, during the worship on every Sunday, people will be asked to consider how they’ve done everything in the past week, whether they’ve tried their best or not. In this way, it’s easier for students to find out problems and to overcome them before they do negative affect on their study. For example, it’s hard for individual to overcome laziness when studying, but the one going to the church has the chance to face laziness directly and therefore has more courage to conquer this weakness. One more assumption is that international students going to the church weekly show a better ability of time managements, which is an important aspect to study well. When studying in the U.S, students need to schedule their study and social life properly and those who are better at time management have the advantage to be efficient and productive. I will find out whether most of the Chinese students who go to the church weekly have fixed schedules for their study in my interviews.

The influence of Christianity on international students can be divided in to the influence on their academic life and social life. I need to do researches on the Internet, finding articles about church functions and their effects on Chinese students. I will also interview several of my Chinese friends to collect different point of views. The people I will interview will be undergraduate students, graduate students and PhDs. My research will be focused on out how Chinese students become familiar with church functions and how churches affect Chinese students at Purdue University in social and academic life.