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Research and Writing Assignment week 7

“What if?” this question is something a lot of people think about when looking at the past. Today I want to look at how today could have been different if certain aspects would have happened differently when it comes to religion. What if Constantine had converted to Mithraism, the religion of much of the Roman army, instead of Christianity?

If Constantine had converted to Mithraism instead of Christianity, it is very likely that the course of Roman history would have been very different than it turned out. I want to present a few possible outcomes which could have happened in my opinion.

The first possibility would have been that the Mithraism would have become bigger and more popular. The religion was already very popular among the Romans, but if Constantine would have converted to this religion as well it would have had an even wider acceptance throughout the Roman Empire. This would have had a major impact on the religious landscape of the Mediterranean world as Mithraism would have become a major religion. This also could have lead to that Christianity would have struggled. Since it was the dominant religion, it would have been very likely that if Mithraism would have become a major religion, that Christianity could have lost support. Constantine was supporting the Christian church, so without her support Christianity wouldn't have become as big as it became.

Another possible outcome could have been that the role of the emperor would have become more popular and powerful. Since Christianity was emphasizing the community more than individual leaders it would have been likely that if Mithraism became the major religion, the role of the emperor would have developed more.

The last possibility I want to mention is that the relationship between religion and power would have been different. This is connected to the points above, but Christianity emphasis lays on forgiveness, humility and those kind of things, which helped to shift the balance of power in the Roman Empire. The church gained influence, which meant that the role of the emperor lost power. If Mithraism would have become the main religion the emperor would have gotten more power since the focus points of this religion are strength, loyalty and military power. This would have definitely changed some things, especially when it comes to development of democracy.