



'In the beginning was the Word'

is the way St. John's Gospel begins in most English Bibles.

But one might ask which word that was — or, more specifically, which version.

In the nearly two millennia since Christ's death, scholars have produced many versions and translations of the Bible — from the Vulgate to the King James to the New American.

A comparison of these texts reveals numerous variations in language and syntax.

The Living Bible, for example, renders the opening line of John's Gospel as, "Before anything else existed, there was Christ."

Bible versions also vary in the number of books they include.

Although both Catholic and Protestant Bibles contain the same 27 New Testament books, the two versions differ on which books constitute the Old Testament.

The Catholic canon — the list of books accepted as sacred writings — comprises 46 Old Testament books. The Protestant canon, on the other hand, omits seven of these books — Tobit, Judith, 1-2 Maccabees, Wisdom, Ecclesiastes and Baruch — as well as some verses from the books of Daniel and Esther.

Newer versions of Protestant Bibles frequently include these seven books — called the "apocryphal" or "deuterocanonical books" — either in appendices or otherwise set apart from the main text. But Protestant scholars have not yet accepted them as part of the official canon.

Meanwhile, certain Orthodox versions of the Bible
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By Lee Strong

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