Bede was a learned and industrious Anglo-Saxon monk of the monastery of Jarrow in the county of Durham, Northumbria. He lived from about 673 to 735 A.D.

Bede says of himself: “I applied myself wholly to the study of the Scriptures and [was] amid the observation of regular discipline and the daily care of singing in the church. I always took delight in learning, teaching, and writing.” As a teacher he made the monastery so famous a center of learning that 600 monks resorted thither to enjoy the library and be under the influence of Bede. He wrote treatises, in Latin, on The Nature of Things, including astronomy, arithmetic, medicine, grammar, rhetoric, and music. His chief work, an Ecclesiastical History of Our Island and Nation, was translated into Anglo-Saxon by King Alfred, and, being the earliest writing of its kind, gives Bede the honor of being called “The Father of English History.” In this work occurs the famous sentence, “There are no snakes in Ireland.” He declined the position of abbot, not wishing to fritter away his time in housekeeping affairs and office holding. In the chapter titled Recapitulation: He writes, “I have written much concerning the holy places, following, to the best of my knowledge, the truth of history, and in particular the dictation of Arculph, Bishop of Gaul, which Adamnan, that priest so learned in Holy Scripture, hath set down in his jagged style, and comprised in three books.” In summary: “When you have entered the city on the northern side, first of the holy places, as regards the order of the streets, you must turn out of the way to see the Church of Constantine, which is called: the Martyrdom. It was built in the most magnificent and princely style by the Emperor Constantine, to commemorate the finding of our Lord's cross in this place by his mother Helena. To the west of this is seen the Church of Golgotha, where also may be seen the rock which formerly bore that very cross that was fastened to our Lord's body; but which now bears a very large silver cross, and a great wheel of brass hangs from above with lamps. Under the place of our Lord's cross, a vault is hewn out of the rock, in which sacrifice is offered on an altar for honourable persons deceased, their bodies remaining meanwhile in the street. To the westward of this is the Anastasis, that is, the round church of our Saviour’s resurrection.”

Of Constantinople and the church therein which contains our Lord’s cross, Bede writes: “Constantinople is bounded on all sides except the north by the sea…Constantine was at first disposed to build it in Cilicia, near the sea which separates Europe and Asia, but on a certain night all the iron tools were carried away, and when men were sent to fetch them they were found on the European side: for there it was the will of God that it should be built. In this city is a church of wonderful workmanship, called the church of Saint Sophia, built up from its foundation of a circular shape, domed in, and surrounded by three walls. It is supported to a great height on columns and arches, and in its inmost part on the north side, a large and beautiful closet, wherein is a wooden chest with a wooden lid, containing three pieces of our Lord's cross, that is to say, the long timber cut in two, and the transverse part of the same holy cross. These pieces are exhibited for the adoration of the people three times only in the year, namely, on the day of our Lord's supper, the day of the preparation, and on the Holy Sabbath. On the first of these, the chest, which is two cubits long and one broad, is set out on a golden altar with the holy cross exposed to view: the Emperor first approaches, and after him all the different ranks of laymen, in order, kiss and worship it: on the following day the Empress and all the married women and virgins do the same; but on the third day the bishops and different orders of the clergy do it, and then the chest is shut and carried back to the closet before mentioned. As long as it remains open on the altar a wonderful odor spreads through the whole church. For an odoriferous liquor like oil flows from the knots of the holy wood, the least drop of which cures every complaint which a man may be afflicted with.” The Venerable Bede concludes with:

Thus have I sought in these few words to trace
The form and site of every holy place.
For these memorials of past times have brought,
And from each writer new instructions sought.
Grant, Jesus, that in Heaven we all may rest,
And be for ever with Thy presence blest!

During the reign of Constantine, here recalled by Bede, historians can reflect on the early regard for and actual veneration of relics related to the Saviour which was a hallmark of the worship and ritual later in the Dark Ages concerning Christ and His kingdom. Even so, in the words of Richard Green in his Short History of the English People, Bede was: First among English scholars, first among English theologians, first among English historians, it is in the work of the monk of Jarrow that English literature strikes its roots. In the 600 scholars who gathered around him for instruction, he is the father of our national education. In his physical treatises, he is the first figure to which our science looks back. His last work was a translation of the Gospel of John into English… Amid tears and farewells the last day of Bede on this earth wore away to eventide. “There is yet one sentence unwritten, dear master,” said the boy. “Write it quickly,” bade the dying man. “It is finished now,” said the little scribe, at last. “You speak truth,” said the master; “all is finished now.” Placed upon the pavement, his head supported in his scholars’ arms, his face turned to the spot where he was wont to pray, Bede chanted the solemn “Glory to God.” As his voice reached the close of his song he passed quietly away.