Barlaam the Calabrian Encyclopedia Article

Barlaam the Calabrian

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c. 1290-c. 1350

Byzantine scholar who greatly influenced Western Europe's growing interest in Greek culture, which would blossom during the Renaissance. A humanist, Barlaam was distinguished by his strong opposition to Hesychasm, a radical mystic movement among the monks of the Byzantine Empire. From 1339 he served as Byzantine envoy to the court of Pope Benedict XII (r. 1334-42) at Avignon, and during this time he taught Greek to Petrarch (1304-1374). It was the latter who first used the term *Renaissance* to describe the changes taking place in thought and society at that time.