

Notes 5.5 - From Feudalism to Enlightenment

Feudalism was in control of Europe during Early Middle Ages. Nobles controlled everything except cities. Conservative ideas resist change.

In cities, more freedom to discuss ideas. Saw guilds and trade unions spring up to protect professions. The middle class is not tied to feudalism. Begin to seek out education in cities, beginnings of first universities. This is the start of the Renaissance.

Invention of the printing press accelerates ideas of scientific revolution which spread into thinking about society, which was a part of the Enlightenment, which is also known as the "Age of Reason."

Monarchies were threatened by several revolts and revolutions, but returned each time to control countries.

In reaction, monarchies became more powerful and created their own standing armies, that they controlled. They increased the size of government to expand control.

Several Enlightenment thinkers emerged which provided a model for liberal scientific society:

Thomas Hobbes - natural rights and equality for all men

Jean-Jacques Rousseau - social contract between government and the people

John Locke - inalienable rights for all men

This leads to the French Revolution which was a turning point in modern European history:

The decline of powerful monarchies, feudalism and the Church..
The rise of the individual with rights and protections under law.