

was the official introduction of Christianity in 988 by the Grand Duke Vladimir the Holy. By his order thousands of people were baptized in the River Dniepr by Byzantine or Greek priests.

As concerns the relations of the rulers to their subjects, it is interesting to notice that while during the modern period autocratic government has been characteristic, there was during the first period a kind of constitutional or even republican government. The princes were merely the leaders of the troops, and they strove to distinguish themselves by military exploits.

2. Unfortunately all the good that was just taking root was suppressed by the Mongolian invasion of the 13th century. The conflicts of the princes had so exhausted the strength of Russia that she could not withstand the Mongol pressure.

This period was a time of degradation and misery. But fortunately the Mongol Khans did not meddle much with the internal life of the country, but satisfied themselves with the south and south-eastern corner, where they lived on the tribute collected by the Russian princes, together with their own presents.

Notwithstanding the gloom and shame of this period, one lesson it taught Russia, viz.: the strength of unity. The principality of Moscow especially profited by this lesson, and in 1430, now no more a