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The relationship of government to the governed is essentially one of contract or bargain as obedience is conditional on the government fulfilling its own part and doing that it is entitled to do by its Charter or Constitution and no more. The principle of consent, thus, became an important factor in the development of political thought and consequently it eclipsed the much talked of and, till then, widely accepted doctrine of the Divine Origin of the State.

As Gilchrist points out, " the chief enemy to the Divine Theory was the Contract Theory." Both Locke and Rousseau declared in most unequivocal terms that the monarch derived his authority not from God but from the people and he could continue to remain in office only on the condition of good government. The Contract Theory, therefore, served a useful purpose in its time by combating the claims of irresponsible rulers and class privilege. The Contract Theory has also helped in the development of the modern concept of sovereignty.

Hobbes paved the way for Austin, the exponent of legal sovereignty; Locke was the champion of political sovereignty; and Rousseau was the high priest of popular sovereignty. Rousseau also brought into prominence the ideal of direct democracy. Indirect or representative democracy lost much of its appeal after the end of World War I. New devices of popular participation in the work of government began to be advocated, and the referendum is merely a modified form of Rousseau's conception of inalienable sovereignty of the people. Furthermore, the modern theory of a clear separation between the State and government has really come to us from Locke.

Finally, the Contract Theory raises the common man on the pedestal of political glory. The modern cry of equal right of voting for all citizens is the legacy of Rousseau's ideal of equal political rights.