

Prayer of the Month • March 2012

With a thankful heart, O Lord, I acknowledge thine infinite goodness in giving me such a portion of worldly goods as frees me from anxious cares: but I beseech thee to give me grace so to receive the gifts that they may never become snares and temptations. Make me sensible of their uncertainty that I may sit loose to them, using them temperately whilst thou art pleased to continue them, and ready to part with them contentedly when thy good Providence shall call me to such a resignation.

John Hough, Bishop of Worcester, 1651–1743

‘I have learnt in whatever state to be content’, St Paul writes. John Hough certainly had plenty of experience on which to base such a prayer, over the series of confrontations over his presidency of Magdalen College, alternately being accepted and rejected. We should of



course give thanks for all the good things we receive, and that we can be saved from anxiety over the necessities of life. There can be a fine line between appreciating something and depending on it. Hough prays to sit lightly to whatever benefits he receives, and that he may have a spirit of resignation when a benefit is lost. We can imagine the experience behind this final thought. May we achieve such equanimity without the need for an experience like his!

Born in 1651, John Hough studied at Magdalen College, Oxford, from which he graduated in 1676. He was elected Provost of the same college in 1687, but due to the opposition of King James II, the Court of Ecclesiastical Commission replaced him with Samuel Parker, Bishop of Oxford. Hough refused to accept the replacement, but was overruled. Parker died early in 1688, and was replaced by Bonaventure Giffard. After the Glorious Revolution, though, Hough was reinstated. He became successively Bishop of Oxford (1690–9); Lichfield and Coventry (1699–1717); and finally Worcester (1717–43). He died on 8 May 1743. According to a biography of him, published in the year of his death, he was courteous, affable and generous, with an unaffected piety. There is a memorial to him in Worcester Cathedral.

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