



The Diaconate: A Full and Equal Order

James Monroe Barnett

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This book is a highly readable, comprehensive study that has established itself as the definitive work on the diaconate. Drawing upon original sources, the book provides valuable insights into the development of the office of the deacon in the early church and situates it within the context of the church's total ministry. Dr. Barnett contends that a radical change in the nature and understanding of the church's ministry took place in the fourth century. A ministry that had included the whole people of God in a horizontal, organic structure gave way to one that was clerical and hierarchical. This change, among other factors, eventually transformed the diaconate into an inconsequential, transitional office on the way to the priesthood. Responding to the present-day revival of the diaconate in the Roman Catholic, Episcopal, Lutheran, and other churches, Barnett calls for a restoration of the office to its original place as full and equal order, thus re-creating the great symbol of the servant ministry that Christ gave to all the church. James Monroe Barnett, now living in retirement in Omaha, is the former rector of Trinity Episcopal Church, Norfolk, NE.

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