

Bernard Mulholland

# The Early Byzantine Christian Church

An Archaeological Re-assessment of Forty-Seven  
Early Byzantine Basilical Church Excavations  
Primarily in Israel and Jordan, and their  
Historical and Liturgical Context

9

Peter Lang

## Summary

In this book the object of study is institutional behaviour in the Early Byzantine Church in which ritualised activities occur with great frequency. The aim of the book was to examine a large sample of church sites to determine whether there might be evidence for repeated patterns of artefactual deposition in the archaeological record that could provide evidence for some of these activities. Chapter 2 establishes the method used, why artefactual evidence is restricted to those artefacts associated with the site when it functioned as a church, and re-arranged into their original context and stratigraphy to allow like-for-like comparative analysis across sites with a similar church plan.

The church sites were limited to the three most common basilical forms. However in Chapter 3 it is observed that evidence from post holes for the altar table and chancel screen posts, together with whole or fragmentary liturgical furniture, indicated that there are two distinct internal layouts that can affect artefactual deposition, i.e. a  $\Pi$ -shaped sanctuary in front of the apse, and also a T-shaped or bar-shaped sanctuary that extends across each of the side aisles. This observation led to three new groups of church sites: Constantinopolitan, Syrian and Roman. Detailed analysis of each group revealed further characteristics associated with each group. The same evidence identified a second focus of liturgical activity located in side chapels which is examined in Chapter 4, and further evidence from five inscriptions indicates that these side chapels functioned as *diakonika*.

The appearance of relatively large quantities of domestic artefacts, including amphorae, is examined in detail in Chapter 5 and in the next chapter the archaeological evidence is scrutinised for any evidence that the sexes were segregated in the Early Byzantine Church. The evidence is summarised in Chapter 7, and further avenues of research discussed in the last chapter.