

SUPPLEMENTS TO METHOD & THEORY IN THE STUDY OF RELIGION

# FABRICATING FOUNDERS IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND

*History, Rhetoric,  
and the Origins of Christianity*

Lauren Horn Griffin



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This book argues that in order to understand nationalisms, we need a clearer understanding of the types of cultural myths, symbols, and traditions that legitimate them. Through an investigation of how early modern Catholics and Protestants reimagined, reinterpreted, and rewrote the lives of the founder-saints who spread Christianity in England, this book argues that confessional debates played a critical role in the development of national identities. Analyzing the discursive construction of time and place, the invocation of forces beyond the human to naturalize and authorize, and the role of visual and ritual culture in fabrications of the past, this book provides a case study for how to approach claims about founding figures. Serving as a timely example of the dependence of national identity on key religious resources, Griffin shows how origin narratives – particularly the founding figures that anchor them – function as uniquely powerful rhetorical tools for the cultural production of regional and national identity.