

Gamper, Rudolf; Krauer, Rezia; Müller, Clemens: *Joachim Vadian. 1483/84–1551. Humanist, Arzt, Reformator, Politiker*. Zürich: Chronos Verlag 2017. ISBN: 978-3-0340-1405-2; 391 S.

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Werner Näf's *Vadian und seine Stadt St. Gallen* has long been the authoritative study of the sixteenth-century humanist, physician, reformer, and Bürgermeister. That two-volume work is now over half a century old, however, and it is too lengthy to appeal to a broad audience, although specialists appreciate its detail. This new biography by Rudolf Gamper, retired director of the *Vadianische Sammlung* in St. Gallen's cantonal library, presents St. Gallen's most famous native son to a twenty-first century audience. He addresses two different groups: scholars concerned with Vadian's place in the sixteenth century, and more general readers wanting an accessible introduction to Vadian's life and importance. Writing for both groups is not an easy task, but with this biography Gamper has succeeded admirably.

Gamper uses the statue of Vadian commissioned in 1904 to illustrate the Bürgermeister's central place in the *Erinnerungskultur* of St. Gallen, even as he points out that Vadian's past biographers have varied widely in how they weighted and evaluated their subject's accomplishments in so many different fields. His description of St. Gallen in the early sixteenth century provides the background for Vadian's life. Fundamental was the uneasy co-existence between the free imperial city of St. Gallen and the imperial abbey of St. Gallen, which was located within the city walls and controlled the surrounding territory. Political tensions between city and abbey were mitigated by their economic co-dependence, for both of them profited from the production of linen cloth. The cloth trade also was the basis for the wealth of the von Watt family in the fifteenth century. Joachim von Watt, born in 1483/1484, was educated in the city's Latin school and adopted the humanist name of Vadianus while a university student in Vienna.

The longest chapters of the book are devoted to the three phases of Vadian's career, beginning with his time as student and then as professor in Vienna (1502–1518). There he associated with the humanist circle founded by Conrad Celtis, and in 1514 he was crowned poet laureate, the rough equivalent of an advanced degree in the humanist disciplines. This led to his appointment to the chair for poetry in the *collegium poetarum*, which he held while he pursued a degree in medicine. Although Vadian achieved prominence in the humanist milieu of Vienna, he chose to return home to St. Gallen after finishing his medical degree in 1518. The next two chapters cover his rise to political prominence, which coincided with the spread of the Reformation throughout the Swiss Confederation (1519–1531), and then his years as mature politician, historian, and defender of the Reformation (1532–1551). After Vadian's return to St. Gallen, his older friendships from Vienna were replaced by new ties to Swiss humanists and reformers. Vadian did not show any particular interest in religious questions in Vienna, but by the early 1520s he and the other members of St. Gallen's learned elite were reading and discussing Luther's works in conjunction with Erasmus' edition of and annotations on the New Testament. After Vadian was elected Bürgermeister at the end of 1525, he was in a position to oversee the city's break with the Roman church. This included secularizing the abbey in 1529, but in the wake of the Second Kappel War the city had to restore the confiscated property to the monks and allow the mass to be said once more in the abbey church. Because the city was not a full member of the Swiss Confederation, Bürgermeister Vadian had little direct influence on political developments outside of St. Gallen, but his contacts with leading Swiss reformers enabled him to represent St. Gallen's interests. Over the last two decades of his life, Vadian also gathered material and wrote geographical and historical works, most of which would remain unpublished during his lifetime. The biography closes with a brief chapter evaluating the impact of Vadian's scholarly work both during his lifetime and after, and it includes several excurses that summarize the debate over his birthdate and describe

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his correspondence, the books in his library given to St. Gallen after his death, and his unpublished manuscripts.

Gamper's work is an attractive and very readable overview of Vadian's life and importance. The biography is richly illustrated with color images of books, manuscripts, letters, and images from the *Vadianische Sammlung*. Each of the major chapters is divided into several shorter sections beginning with a paragraph summary of its contents, so that casual readers can easily find what most interests them. Gamper does not assume his readers have specialized knowledge of the early modern period, and so, for instance, he describes the structure of the late medieval university as part of his discussion of Vadian's academic career. Gamper freely acknowledges his indebtedness to the older biography by Näf, but at the same time he points to where his discussion revises or supplements it, especially on the basis of the cataloging and editing of Vadian's published and unpublished works. Although it does not replace Näf, this new biography is the ideal one-volume introduction to Vadian's life and to Vadian scholarship, and it will be the starting point for a new generation of researchers.

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