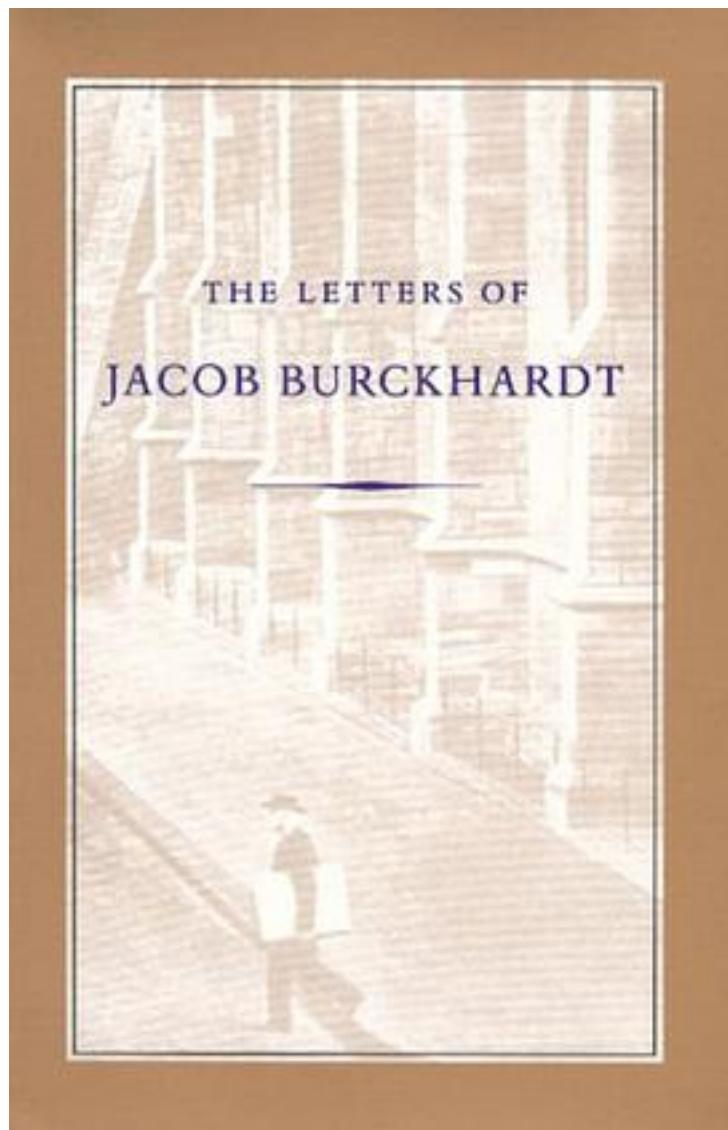


LETTERS OF JACOB BURCKHARDT, THE



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Burckhardt was the most renowned of the historians of the nineteenth century to predict, with astonishing accuracy, the totalitarian direction that history could take -- and which history in fact did take in the twentieth century. It was in his letters, rather than in his lectures or longer works, that Burckhardt most directly addressed the currents of intellectual thought and social and political order -- or disorder -- of Europe in the nineteenth century. It was in his letters, for instance, that he warned that these currents portended the rise of a new kind of demagogue unique to the modern era. Such demagogues would, Burckhardt feared, respond to the complexities and confusions of modern life by becoming 'terrible simplifiers', marshalling masses of people into totalitarian regimes for simple solutions to complex challenges that would wreak havoc upon numerous countries and millions of lives. Not only are the letters addressed to some of the most important thinkers of the time (Nietzsche, Burckhardt's younger colleague at the University of Basel, among them), but also they address the most pressing issues and the most important personages of the era.

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