

Jim Bakker



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Watched in more homes than Johnny Carson's Tonight Show, Jim Bakker's PTL Club was the most popular religious TV program of all time. But Bakker's empire collapsed when he was indicted by a federal grand jury for television fraud. He was found guilty after a tumultuous five-week trial, then sentenced to 45 years in prison by presiding judge "Maximum Bob" Potter. Evidence of intentional fraud on Bakker's part was weak. Videotapes of past PTL programs that would have helped Bakker's defense were never seen by the jury. What the jury did hear about were million-dollar salaries, corporate jets, and air-conditioned doghouses. James A. Albert is a law professor, trial lawyer, and expert on broadcast law. He is not a Pentecostalist or a follower of Bakker's. His curiosity piqued by strange and alarming details of the trial (including reports that the religious beliefs of some of Bakker's witnesses were held up to ridicule in the courtroom), Professor Albert thoroughly investigated the Bakker story. He scrutinized 4,000 pages of trial transcript and conducted exclusive interviews with Bakker, the witnesses, lawyers, and jurors. The result is an exciting courtroom drama. At the same time, Albert tries to understand how someone who may well have been innocent of the crimes with which he was charged could have been brought so low.

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