

Alice's "resurrected" thesis

which propelled me towards completion. She had said that the successful completion of a PhD meant a candidate had to take responsibility for managing their supervisors. She was equally convinced that good supervisors knew when and what to submit. I

A year later I left the church I had pastored for 13 years, and I began teaching English casually in colleges and scrambling to get appropriate qualifications. While I was taking night classes I heard about a PhD scholarship opportunity in an industry research partnership, close to some of my interests. The scholarship was going begging and they took me with enthusiasm. It was an unpremeditated leap into darkness for me. The mixture of poor motivations included unfulfilled ambition, no life direction, no permanent job, and the seductive security offered by three years regular tax-free income which I could supplement with teaching.

I enjoyed my PhD years despite the difficulties. It was a period of reflection, learning and personal growth. It gave me credibility as a teacher and a place in the university, and opened up opportunities for further interesting projects. If I had been more cautious, I could have found other more appropriate routes with the same benefits, a better career path, and perhaps a more desirable outcome in the shorter term. I was not young, and did not attract advice.

In theory I was not a good candidate. My Honours was a second, and not the first that is normally required for a PhD. Moreover, an honours in theology does not articulate well with other disciplines. In some ways I was not skilled in social science research simply because my capacity for critical and analytical thinking had been locked up in the church with its absolutes. I did not understand

style as much as radical

I can now see where my drift into “scientific” grounded theory came from. With

A month before my two fails came back from the examiners I had a “prophetic” experience. I was reading Karen Armstrong’s *The Spiral Staircase*. Having left the church I was interested in her experience of leaving a convent. Then I came on the story of her failed Oxford PhD. Although it had been regarded as an excellent thesis, she was given a hostile examiner who failed her, with no chance of rewriti

clear in my mind and I knew the way through. Moreover, I ditched most of the original text