

Hawking says heaven is for 'people afraid of the dark'

by [Al Webb](#)

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LONDON (RNS) Professor Stephen Hawking, one of the world's most eminent scientists, says the concept of heaven is "a fairy story for people afraid of the dark."

In an interview with London's Guardian newspaper, the 69-year-old Cambridge University cosmologist said that as a victim of motor neuron disease he has lived under the shadow of death for the last 49 years, and it holds no fear for him.

"I regard the brain as a computer that will stop working when its components fail," he said, and he insisted that "there is no heaven or afterlife for broken-down computers -- that is a fairy story for people afraid of the dark."

Hawking, author of the international best-seller "A Brief History of Time," said through a voice synthesizer from his wheelchair that he is unafraid of death, although "I'm in no hurry to die."

"I have so much to do first," he said.

In "A Brief History of Time," written 23 years ago, the scientist said that if mankind eventually discovers a "complete theory" to explain the universe, "it would be the ultimate triumph of human reason, for then we should know the mind of God."

But now, he said, in the ongoing debate over whether God or the laws of science determined the universe, "I believe the second."

Hawking added that "if you like, you can call the laws of science 'God,' but it wouldn't be a personal God that you could meet and ask questions."