“What Happened to Hell?”

January 1961
Chicago, Ill

On 20 November 1960, Ebony managing editor Era Bell Thompson conducted a telephone interview with King on “current opinions regarding hell” and published his response in an article in the magazine’s January 1961 issue.

Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., Baptist, Atlanta. Says the man who has had his share of hell on earth “I do not believe in hell as a place of a literal burning fire. Hell, to me, is a condition of being out of fellowship with God. It is man’s refusal to accept the Grace of God. It is the state in which the individual continues to experience the frustrations, contradictions and agonies of earthly life. Hell is as real as absolute loneliness and isolation.”

PD Ebony (January 1961) 52

The Man Who Was a Fool,
Sermon Delivered at the Detroit Council of Churches’ Noon Lenten Services

[6 March 1961]
Detroit, Mich

At the invitation of G. Merrill Lenox, director of the Detroit Council of Churches, King preached this sermon at the city’s Central Methodist Church as part of the Council’s 1961 Noon Lenten series. Drawing on George Buttrick’s explication of Jesus’ parable of the rich fool, he warns against the pursuit of material possessions. “There is always the danger that we will judge the success of our professions by the size of the wheelbase on our automobiles and the index of our salaries rather than the quality of our service to humanity.” In contrast to this preoccupation with individual

PD Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project

1. Lenox to King, 14 April 1959. King accepted in a 30 April 1959 letter.