Deep River

The African-American theologian Howard Thurman found “Deep River,” with its image of life as a river, to be the most universal of all the spirituals. And the white literary critic H. L. Mencken said the unknown slave author of “Deep River” “was one of the greatest poets we have ever produced.” The “campground” in the song refers to both Heaven and the free land of the North. One ex-slave told a Quaker abolitionist that for many slaves the image meant returning to Africa.

Deep . . . ri-ver, My home is o-ver Jo-rdan,

Deep . . . ri-ver, Lord, I

want to cross o-ver in-to camp-ground, Lord, I

want to cross o-ver in-to camp-ground, Lord, I

want to cross o-ver in-to camp-ground, Lord, I
want to cross over into camp ground.

1. Oh, don’t you want to go to that Gospel-feast, That
2. I’ll go into heaven, and take my seat,
3. Oh, when I get to heav’n, I’ll walk all about, There’s

want to cross over into camp ground, Lord, I

want to cross over into camp ground, Lord, I

want to cross over into camp ground, Lord, I

want to cross over into camp ground.

1. promised land where all is peace? Lord, I
2. Cast my crown at Jesus’ feet. Lord, I
3. nobody there for to turn me out. Lord, I