The critiques of two “orthodox” Christian doctrines in chapters 1 and 2 placed alongside the explication of the African worldview, and specifically Akan anthropology, in chapter 3 offer compelling possibilities for constructive theological work for the future of Black theology and the theologies of African American Christians generally. What the previous chapters show is that indigenous African thought and traditional Protestant theology posit radically different ideas about the nature of human beings, the purpose of their creation, and how humans achieve salvation or metaphysical completion. Black theology has been critical of traditional Protestant theology for the way in which it has historically supported and condoned the oppression of black people, yet, by and large, Black theology has not radically deconstructed established Protestant approaches to theological anthropology or the exclusive Christology that, in many ways, provides theological legitimacy for this oppression. Specifically, Black theology has not provided an answer for the alienation from, even shame for, indigenous Africa prevalent among most black Christians and justified on theological grounds, although James Cone defines the goals of Black Power and Black theology as commensurate with addressing such alienation. He makes clear, “The black existential mood that expresses itself in black power and black theology stems from the recognition that black identity must be defined in terms of its African heritage rather than in terms of European enslavement.”

I contend black Christian alienation from Africa can begin to be overcome by exploring the rich theological and philosophical legacy of indigenous African religious systems and affirming their legitimacy.
and priority for black Christian theological construction, discourse, and practice.

To this end, I begin the task of self-consciously constructing a Christian doctrine of the human being, based on indigenous African thought, which can be useful to black Christians who seek to affirm themselves, and their ancestral culture, as people of African descent. Michel Foucault gives voice to the expression “subjugated knowledge,” as the type of knowledge that is suppressed, dismissed, and disavowed as legitimate knowledge in a given society. It is a type of knowledge not accepted or allowed to exist as knowledge, a disqualified knowledge.\(^2\) Foucault’s concept provides a category for understanding the treatment of indigenous African knowledge in the West. It is a knowledge that has been subjugated primarily by classical Christian (especially evangelical Protestant) theology, which disavows and delegitimizes any perspective (or knowledge) that contradicts, or even disagrees with, itself. Black Christians are caught in a bind, therefore, since affirming their Christian allegiance necessarily requires rejecting, or at least being extremely alienated from, their Africanness. I argue that this alienation can begin to be overcome by resuscitating ancient African thought and affirming it as a legitimate source of religious and philosophical knowledge production. By encouraging a dialogue between traditional African religions and Christian theology and seeing the possibility for constructive theological work between these two thought systems, I affirm that the dead are not dead, and ancient Africa has much to contribute to contemporary Western theology, Black theology, and the theologies of twenty-first-century African American Christians in general.

What is being proposed here is the beginning of a constructive theology situated in a postcolonial African American context. It is context specific since it is being offered to address a problem that afflicts diasporic African Christians: black anti-African sentiment. That said, my objective is not to present African thought as a panacea to cure all the ills that Western thought has imposed on African-descended peoples. This would be to dichotomize reality into the all-too-easy duality of good versus evil, right over wrong, or oppressive versus liberating. Nor is it appropriate to take Akan religious systems as understood and practiced in Africa and simply transplant some presumed pristine, static conception within the African American Christian context. Rather, the objective is to consider the cultural and religious loss of the African spiritual holocaust on black people in America, and explore what a theology might look like if African religious thought and theological categories were privileged instead of subjugated and