INITIALLY, A PERSON INVESTIGATING the practice of Christian Science treatment and healing may get the impression that it's a version of "mind over matter"—a means of harnessing human mind power. With that approach, it's the human mind that is expected to heal the body, resolve injustice, improve relationships, and help buck us up under economic and employment pressures. But a deeper exploration of Christian Science reveals that "mind over matter" is considerably removed from the method that was the basis of Christ Jesus' healing.

"He that believeth on me," said Jesus, "the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father" (John 14:12). His words, "I go unto my Father," indicate that he actually looked to God, not to the human mind, to practice metaphysical healing. And Jesus encouraged his followers, in their own prayers, to take precisely the same line.

I've found that the first thing that turning wholeheartedly to God does is reveal a state of existence that previously may have seemed completely hidden from thought. Sometimes, that which appears threatening, unsolvable, chronic, or deadly, can easily obscure the presence of God's goodness. But then an inspired view brings to light a beautiful, ideal, and completely perfect state of being. It's God's view. "And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good," says the Bible (Gen. 1:31). Included specifically in this goodness is God's idea—His creation. And this creation, which includes every one of us, has a spiritual identity, not a material one. It's logical that His creation is spiritual.
Like produces like, so the substance with which divine Spirit creates is spiritual. Never constricted by—or held hostage in—matter.

By turning not to the human mind, but to our Father in prayer, it becomes clear that the goodness and perfection of God's creation are intact. God's nature is already fully expressed in each of us, and Jesus provided a great insight when he said, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). That wasn't a request—it was a vivid observation about the present fact of God's perfection, and of our expression of divine perfection. Becoming more familiar with how this perfection is expressed in us provides a basis from which to pray, reason forward, and most importantly, to understand the Christly messages that lead us directly to God when we go to Him for help.

From God's perspective, His creation is never in need of improvement or repair. On the other hand, the world around us is a waterfall of opinions and false beliefs about the state of God and humanity. It constantly pours out observations, accusations, and predictions of the human family as susceptible, victimized, ill, lacking, decrepit, and so on. The five mortal senses doggedly report stages of mortality and demise. God's creation, however, isn't material—and never will be. If God's offspring isn't actually matter, then what would be the point in treating someone prayerfully as if he or she were matter?

A physician uses matter to treat matter. As metaphysicians, we may sometimes think that we take an entirely different approach, but are we, if we are applying prayerful treatment to matter—seen as material symptoms called poverty, illness, or injury? If that's the case, it's time for an upgrade. Because battling matter, whether in the doctor's case with more matter, or in the healer's case with prayer, is ultimately a path to confusion, disappointment, and frustration. That's because it's the belief in matter itself that is the difficulty in the first place.

If matter is out of the equation, then what is it that we address in prayer? False beliefs and notions about the nature of God and God's creation are always
the target. And there is a wrinkle to this that's worth noting. I've noticed when praying for others, I need to take care that I am not viewing a patient as someone who believes he is sick—because that's a flawed assumption, too. It's approaching prayer treatment with the assumption that God has made an imperfect or delusional man or woman. Even if we realize that one can't possess imperfect matter, what has snuck into our concept of the patient is that this "perfect" idea that God created, has an imperfect thought. Instead of possessing imperfect matter, you consider your patient to have an imperfect thought. From this wobbly basis—seeing a patient who is holding a wrong thought about herself/himself—we might be tempted to do battle with the patient, instead of the false belief!

So with false belief as the target, what's next? As with Jesus, we are completely confident that we can turn for help, not to human intellectualism, but entirely to God, the divine Mind, who gives exactly the inspiration needed to wash thoughts clean from the lies about what God is and what we are, by reflection. In this spiritual alignment with the Father, we're receptive and ready to learn something new about how God has created everything, including our patients. In that receptivity, we always will feel God's love, along with whatever message He has for us to hear. It's not only possible, but natural to learn to listen to God, and to follow Him consistently in this way.

In order to speak and write with authority about healing with God's power alone, Mary Baker Eddy took case after case of disease and injury and healed each one. On the basis of her own experiences, she observed: "A false belief is both the tempter and the tempted, the sin and the sinner, the disease and its cause. It is well to be calm in sickness; to be hopeful is still better; but to understand that sickness is not real and that Truth can destroy its seeming reality, is best of all, for this understanding is the universal and perfect remedy" (Science and Health, pp. 393–394).

The "understanding" that she was talking about isn't produced somehow by synapses in the human brain, but is something that gently comes to us from
God. "He shall give his angels charge over thee," says the Bible (Ps. 91:11). These "angel messages," revealing how God knows us, are countless and constant, and they are always ministering to us. Because of their constancy, Christian Science treatment is reliable and repeatable.

It is through listening for—and following—these angelic, Christly messages that we take the reins of our own lives and learn to practice spiritual healing successfully. It's never too early or too late to do this. Even as a child, Mary Baker Eddy contemplated prayerful treatment. "Later," she said, speaking about herself, "she learned that her own prayers failed to heal her as did the prayers of her devout parents and the church; but when the spiritual sense of the creed was discerned in the Science of Christianity, this spiritual sense was a present help. It was the living, palpating presence of Christ, Truth, which healed the sick" (Science and Health, p. 351).

The "living, palpitating presence of Christ, Truth," is exactly what routs out false beliefs, and allows us to cultivate an aptitude for responding to the Christ, Truth, every day—by practicing it. One's thought is the playing field, and moment by moment, it becomes a joyous practice session. In practice you can agree with the fact that spiritual harmony is in place, accede to the presence of God's goodness, and concur with God when we hear a message like, "Thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine" (Luke 15:31).

Practicing in this way is to claim God's view of the universe—not "mind over matter," but divine Mindinstead of matter. This view is the sole source of the truth and power that has always reliably healed—and always will heal.