

Houteff Against Alternative Medicine – Davidian History Day

Description

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It's October 25 – Davidian History Day!

Davidian history is just so fascinating; there are so many things that could be discussed and written about. But given that we're in the midst of a global pandemic, it's fitting this year to write about health. [Victor Houteff](#), who (for those who don't know) was the founder of the Davidian movement, promoted health reform as any good Adventist would. He wrote a tract in 1946 called [The Entering Wedge](#) outlining some basic principles for healthy living. Some of it is certainly outdated, as you would expect for something written in the 40s, but the principles still stand. What is less well-known, even among Davidians, is that before he died in 1955, Houteff was working on another tract on health – [The Entering Wedge Part 2](#), which was focused to some extent on correcting some extremes among professed health reformers. He died before having a chance to publish it, but when [Ben Roden](#) purchased Mt. Carmel in the mid-'60s, he obtained the manuscripts and was able to publish it as a tract in 1968. Among the many good things Houteff says in the tract, he expresses a view that some may find surprising, but which Davidians and Seventh-day Adventists at large (along with everyone else) can greatly benefit from. Here's the statement:

Now at the outset of our study let us note what the *Testimonies to the Church* say on the subject of health reform. Here are the statements, "Our workers should use their knowledge of the laws of life and health. They should study from cause to effect. *Read the best authors on these subjects*, and obey religiously that which your reason tells you is truth." – *Councils on Health*, p. 566, and here are the conditions upon which they are made. The command to inquire from *the best health authorities* is a positive declaration to health seekers that Sister White's knowledge of food values and their effect upon the human machine did not originate with her and not with Heaven, but with *the best health authorities in her day*. Since we therefore take the part of her writings that originated with her as inspired, we are definitely charged by Heaven Itself to inquire from the "best health authorities" *in our day* as she did in her day if we care for our health. And what ever their findings be *that* is what we must believe, and their recommendations we must accept and obey in preference to their recommendations of her day, for in her day knowledge on the subject had just begun. Anything short of this, therefore, is direct violation against Inspiration's appeal as it is against the individual's health interest. The great question that now arises is not so much what she teaches on diet as it is to know *who the best health authorities are and what they teach*. Who are they? *Certainly not those who label their products, writing and professional practices Health, Nature, Drugless, – and so on. These are not health authorities at all*, and most of them are in the field to sell either their profession or their *so-called health product*. Then, too, these professionally shrewd, studiously *downing all popular products and professions*

, for they well know that their only opportunity to sell something to the public depends on making people prejudiced against and fearful of the products and professions of all others. They know that in no other way their *so-called health and cure* stands a chance at all. So, they spend years in studying how to frighten the public *from the well known markets and professional places*, and how to drive them to their own *so-called health shops* and places of professional services. And as there are multitudes of people who are ever looking for something new and better, many thoughtlessly flock to these *unapproved places* where they in time discover that they have swallowed a *quack's bait*, sinker, hook and line. At last they find themselves hanging on a fish pole as it were with empty pockets and with inflamed stomachs. – The Entering Wedge, Part 2, pp. 15-17

There are several important things to notice about this statement. First of all, Houteff points out that a key principle in Ellen White's teachings about health reform is to read the best authors on the various health subjects. He points out that knowledge on the subject of health had really just begun in Ellen White's day, which makes it pretty obvious that he's understanding true knowledge of health to be found in modern medical science rather than in any of the medicinal practices and beliefs of ancient folk traditions. He then advocates a progressive position in regard to health knowledge. Knowledge continues to increase and so we should update our perspectives on health as medical science learns more. He also points out that Ellen White's admonition to read the best authors on the subjects of health indicates that she didn't get her knowledge about the specifics of health from God, but she instead got it from the best authors she had available to her. Doubtless, she did this in obedience to the principles of the health message she received from God. This establishes a precedent for us to do the same – to obtain our knowledge of health from the best authors in our day. Lastly, Houteff addresses the incredibly important question of who the best authors are – who are the true health authorities? He focuses on who they are not, saying that they are not those who label their products and practices with terms like "health," "nature," "drugless," and so on and who engage in prejudicing people against the well-known, or mainstream, health professions. Clearly, he's speaking against what today we would call "alternative medicine." This is further confirmed by his use of the term "quack" to refer to those who sell these alternative products and "services."

So, what can we gain from this historical nugget? Well, first of all, most of you reading this probably don't know a whole lot about Victor Houteff, but now you've learned something about him, and I hope it has the effect of lessening any prejudices you may have had. Houteff was a reasonable man; he wasn't an extremist and he actually tried to correct various forms of extremism. Secondly, since Houteff so clearly spoke against alternative medicine, Davidians should make it a point to advance with science-based medicine and to abandon alternative medicine ideas and practices, which should certainly include accepting the well-established science of vaccinology and should lead all Davidians to get vaccinated against COVID-19. Lastly, the above-quoted statement by Houteff isn't just him advocating a certain view; he's explaining principles of the health message as taught by Ellen White. Seventh-day Adventists as a whole can learn from the point Houteff was making about Ellen's health message. Ellen wasn't claiming that every piece of the health advice she gave was revealed to her by God. She focused on principles that govern how we should approach health; one of those principles being that we should read the best authors on the subject. I'll add that elsewhere in Ellen White's writings, she advocated using science as the means of determining proper health practices, and she adamantly warned against

following our own personal experience. You can read this in a chapter called [Experience Not Reliable in Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 3, starting on page 67.](#)

In the midst of this pandemic, it should now be more evident than ever that our individual perspectives on health have an impact, not only on ourselves but on others. Making sure that we're understanding the principles that should govern our health decisions is really important. If you profess to believe in the teachings of Ellen White or Victor Houteff, I encourage you to take their teachings to heart – don't follow alternative medicine or your personal experience – follow the best health authorities of our own day – genuine experts practicing science-based medicine.