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Philip Suciadi Chia
University of Pretoria
ORCID 0000-0003-2453-7497

Temperature or Nature? An Alternative Interpretation of χλιαρός [chliarós] in Revelation 3:16

Abstract: Is χλιαρός in Rev 3:16 temperature or nature? Previous research has largely concentrated on the temperature dimension. This article offers a different perspective on the term χλιαρός in Rev 3:16. It posits that the term should be interpreted through the dual lenses of temperature and the characteristics of the water itself. Key archaeological discoveries, including a prominent marble block featuring water regulations, in conjunction with a structural examination of the Son of Man's admonition in Rev 3:14–22, will be used as a methodology to support the argument that χλιαρός encompasses both temperature and the inherent qualities of the water.

Keywords: Laodicea, lukewarm, temperature, nature, inscription, structural analysis

1. Introduction

The prevailing interpretation of the term χλιαρός is metaphorical, suggesting that the church of Laodicea exhibits a lack of spiritual zeal and a tepid commitment to Christ. This understanding is based on two key premises. Firstly, Laodicea is situated between Hierapolis, which is approximately 6 miles (9 kilometers) to the north and known for its hot springs, and Colossae, located about 12 miles (19 kilometers) to the south, which is recognized for its cold water. Consequently, when the hot water from Hierapolis mixes with the cold water from Colossae, it results in lukewarm water in Laodicea (Hemer 2001, 186–91). Secondly, it is believed that while Laodicea receives hot water from the thermal springs of Hierapolis, this water loses its heat by the time it arrives in the city, thus becoming lukewarm (cf. Morris 1987, 32; Harrington

1993, 73–77; Mangina 2010, 71–72; Patterson 2012, 114–17; Beale 2015, 303–4; Fanning 2020, 234–36; Schreiner 2023, 305–6). Both premises contribute to the interpretation of χλιαρός as indicative of a lukewarm temperature. This interpretation posits a negative connotation for the term 'cold,' suggesting that the Son of Man desires his followers to be either fervently devoted or 'hot' in their commitment to him, rather than remaining indifferent or 'cold.' Thus, a lukewarm temperature is unacceptable (Krodel 1989, 142–43; Thomas 1992, 305–6). G.K. Beale, nevertheless, contests this interpretation, arguing that it is improbable for Christ to endorse such a level of utter disloyalty (Beale 1999, 303). This article further contends that temperature nuances are incorrect, with the supporting arguments outlined in the following sections.

Another interpretation offers a different perspective on the metaphor. The imagery of hot, cold, and lukewarm water is regarded as a distinctive characteristic of Laodicea and its vicinity during the first century. The therapeutic hot springs of Hierapolis were known for their healing properties, while the cold waters of Colossae were celebrated for their purity and refreshing qualities. In contrast, evidence suggests that Laodicea had access solely to tepid water, which was unpalatable and often induced nausea. Although Laodicea developed as a commercial hub due to its advantageous location, it suffered from a lack of quality water. Efforts to transport water into the city resulted only in the delivery of lukewarm and unpleasant water (Porter 1987). Thus, both Porter views lukewarm water as an inappropriate temperature for its intended purpose, which is consumption. Moreover, Rothschild argues that ancient medical practices provide a valuable perspective for understanding the risen Christ's admonition to the church in Laodicea (Rev 3:14–19). The concepts of cold and hot are pivotal in determining health, character, and conduct in ancient medical literature. The term 'lukewarm' signifies a repugnant blend of tepid water and gastric contents – such as excess humors, spoiled food, or toxins – that is expelled from the stomach during necessary purgation due to humoral imbalance. Lukewarm water was regarded as an effective purgative because it embodies a harmonious blend of hot and cold, believed not to exacerbate either extreme. Based on

the principle that "like attracts like," lukewarm water was thought to draw out either excess heat or cold, thereby restoring equilibrium within the body. The risen Christ's warning to expel the Laodicean church aligns with contemporary medical practices that advocate for purgation in cases of bodily imbalance, particularly when dietary and other health interventions prove ineffective (Rothschild 2012, 261–63). The characterization of cold and hot as elemental forces elucidates their role as determinants of character within the passage (i.e., "you are neither cold nor hot"). This interpretation is not derived from an uncommon metaphorical usage but is grounded in the prevalent local scientific understanding of physiognomy. It was believed that a proper equilibrium of cold and hot could be discerned in an individual's facial and bodily features, influencing their personality and behavior. Wickedness was associated with a repugnant appearance. If the local context of the message is acknowledged, it follows that, despite the esteemed reputation of their medical institution and the citizen Polemon, the risen Christ expresses disdain for the Laodiceans. The analysis presented in this essay carries significant implications for both scholars and laypersons. For scholars, it emphasizes the necessity of integrating ancient medical texts into discussions of early Christian writings, as their omission can lead to misinterpretations. For non-scholars, it indicates that the common interpretation of 'lukewarm' (similarly in other languages, such as German: *lauwarm*) as 'lacking conviction' is somewhat misleading. A more precise understanding would be that it signifies 'impotent,' conveying a sense of powerlessness and ineffectiveness (Rothschild 2012, 291).

This article, however, suggests an alternative interpretation that the term χλιαρός carries a connotation of both 'temperature' and 'nature' in Rev 3:16. The methodology employed in this study is based on archaeological discoveries.

2. Methodology

This article incorporates the evidence from a medical, historical, linguistic, contextual analysis of Rev 3:14–22 and ancient documents regarding χλιαρός. In addition, archaeological findings are used

to support the definitions of χλιαρός (both temperature and nature) that suit the context of Laodicea in Rev 3:14–22 (cf. Jervis 2016, 211–43; Russell et al. 2021, 169–210 for the methodology). These archeological discoveries incorporate a lake, ancient bath, and inscriptions found in Laodicea.

3. Arguments for Temperature

This article aims to enhance the understanding of temperature by examining it through a linguistic lens, specifically focusing on the Syriac Peshitta and the Latin Vulgate, rather than reiterating existing significant research that supports the concept of temperature (Karrer 1986, 159–64; Morris 1987, 32; Harrington 1993, 73–77; Mangina 2010, 71–72; Patterson 2012, 114–17; Rothschild 2012, 261–63; Beale 2015, 303–4; Fanning 2020, 234–36; Schreiner 2023, 305–6).

The Syriac Peshitta has arwvp or 'lukewarm.' The Latin Vulgate also translates χλιαρός in terms of temperature. The two ancient translations indicate that the term χλιαρός has been widely understood as lukewarm, particularly in relation to temperature. This research supports a temperature-based interpretation; however, it contends that the lukewarm water in Laodicea is not a result of the thermal springs from Hierapolis losing heat by the time they reach the city. Furthermore, it argues against the notion that the hot water from Hierapolis, when combined with the cold water from Colossae, produces lukewarm water in Laodicea. In essence, this article dismisses the association between the lukewarm water in Laodicea and the mixing of hot and cold waters from these neighboring regions. Wilson, a Biblical archaeologist, presents two arguments opposing this association: evidence derived from geography and findings from archaeology. Geographical studies indicate that the thermal springs of Hierapolis were not directed towards Laodicea due to the presence of a lake that existed between the two cities during the first century A.D. (Wilson 2010, 242; cf. Koester 2014, 337). This implies that the lake acted as a barrier, preventing the flow of hot water from Hierapolis to Laodicea. The notion of hot water traversing this lake to reach Laodicea is difficult to conceive.

Archaeological evidence indicates that the thermal waters from Hierapolis do not reach Laodicea, as no potable water infrastructure has been identified in that area. Instead, the drinking water system constructed by the Romans for Laodicea originates from the Başpınar spring, located approximately 5 miles (or 8 kilometers) to the south, which continues to serve the city of Denizli today. The remnants of ceramic pipes and aqueducts along this water supply route remain visible. Additionally, a segment of the dual travertine pipeline, situated on a hillside to the west of the village of Eskihisar, facilitated the transport of water to the valley and subsequently to the southern water distribution tower. Notably, some clay pipes within this tower exhibit sinter (lime) deposits, indicative of the water's high mineral content (Wilson 2010, 243; Koester 2014, 337). The presence of a lake served as an impediment, and the absence of potable water infrastructure challenges the notion that the inhabitants of Laodicea sourced their water from Hierapolis. Furthermore, Koester argues that aqueducts were utilized in or around all the cities mentioned in the book of Revelation. Laodicea had access to water from two rivers and two springs, with the primary source situated five miles to the south of the city. A complex network of channels, pipes, reservoirs, and fountains catered to the city's water requirements. This system included features like those found in the water systems of other cities, such as measures to ensure the pipes remain unobstructed. The infrastructure was consistently maintained and enhanced during the Hellenistic and Roman eras (Koester 2014, 337; cf. Şimşek et al. 2015). Consequently, this raises the inquiry regarding the origin of the lukewarm water found in Laodicea. The subsequent section, titled 'arguments for nature,' will address this question.

4. Arguments for Nature

This research makes a significant contribution by positing that the term χλιαρός should be interpreted in two distinct contexts: temperature and nature. The article will draw upon various forms of evidence, including archaeological findings related to complex baths in Greco-Roman culture, biological data, inscriptions, historical records, contextual analysis, and ancient documents.

Archaeological evidence pertaining to the intricate bathing facilities of Greco-Roman civilization indicates that lukewarm temperatures, or *tepidus* as termed in Latin, should not be viewed negatively. Laodicea is home to four distinct Roman bath complexes: the East Baths, Central Baths, West Baths, and South Baths. These complexes serve as indicators of Laodicea's affluence and prosperity during the Roman period (cf. Rev 3:17). The Central Baths, for example, are situated on the southern side of the central agora, covering an area of 89 by 58 meters, which corresponds to four blocks within the Hippodamian grid layout. This structure was erected in the second century A.D. but suffered damage due to an earthquake in 494 (Murphy-O'Connor 2008; Greenhalgh 2013; Yazıcı 2022; cf. Iza 2017). To the north of the stadium lies the South Baths complex, notable for its substantial dimensions of 133 by 75 meters. This facility, which functioned as both a bathing area and a gymnasium, was dedicated to Emperor Hadrian and his wife Sabina during their visit to Laodicea in 135 CE. It catered to athletes training in the adjacent stadium. Additionally, on the eastern side of the baths, one can find the South Water Distribution Terminal, known in Latin as castellum aquae, or water castle. This terminal was responsible for supplying water to the nearby baths as well as to the Central Water Distribution Terminal located in the heart of Laodicea. The bath complex, characterized by its tiered arrangement, included a caldarium, which served as a hot room, a tepidarium for lukewarm bathing, two frigidaria featuring cold water, and two apodyteria designated as changing rooms. To the west, an exercise area known as the *palaestra* was situated. Additionally, the complex featured a triple-arched entrance on the western side (Murphy-O'Connor 2008; Greenhalgh 2013; Yazıcı 2022; cf. Iza 2017). Mineral-laden waters constituted a vital component of Roman bathing practices. Numerous bath complexes were constructed in proximity to natural springs or utilized water sources enriched with minerals, including sulfur, iron, and calcium. These minerals were thought to possess distinct therapeutic properties. For example, waters abundant in sulfur were regarded as advantageous for alleviating skin ailments such as eczema and psoriasis. Similarly, iron-enriched waters were linked to enhancements in blood

circulation and overall health. Patrons of the baths would submerge themselves in these mineral-rich waters, operating under the belief that the minerals would permeate the skin, thereby offering health benefits (Yegül 1992, 2010).

In ancient Roman baths, Laodiceans would initially enter and remove their clothing in the apodyterium, which served as the changing area. This shared area provided individuals with the opportunity to disrobe and securely store their personal items. It was a common practice for bathers to entrust their clothing to a specific slave or attendant, thereby guaranteeing the protection of their possessions while they enjoyed their time at the baths (Rook 2002). From the apodyterium, baths visitors would go to the frigidarium, a significant hall within the bath complex, functioning as a transitional zone between the external environment and the interior bathing areas. This expansive and well-ventilated space offered a visually impressive prelude to the opulence of the entire bathing facility (Fagan 1999). In the context of Roman bathing culture, the frigidarium constituted one of the three principal bathing areas. This chamber functioned as a cold room, providing a space for individuals to cool down following their exposure to the hot baths. The application of cold was thought to enhance immune function and improve blood circulation (Yegül 2010). In Roman bathing complexes, the tepidarium functioned as a warm chamber intended to assist bathers in gradually adjusting to elevated temperatures prior to entering the hotter sections. This space acted as a transitional area between the cold frigidarium and the hot caldarium, facilitating relaxation and preparing the body for exposure to intense heat. In other words, bathers would transition from the frigidarium to the tepidarium, a warm chamber designed for relaxation and acclimatization to the rising temperatures. This room typically included heated benches or lounging areas, creating a pleasant environment for social interaction, reading, or relaxation. Additionally, the walls of the tepidarium were often adorned with frescoes or paintings, enhancing the visual charm of the setting (Cunliffe 1969). The caldarium, or hot room, served as the central component of a Roman bath complex. This primary area contained the principal hot baths and was integral to the overall

bathing experience. Within the caldarium, one could find pools or expansive basins filled with hot water, frequently accompanied by steam rooms or sudatoria. To ensure a consistent and opulent temperature, the hypocaust heating system was employed, offering bathers a soothing and restorative bathing environment (Fazio 2008). In conclusion, each room within the bath complex – the apodyterium, frigidarium, tepidarium, and caldarium – offers distinct advantages, including the tepidarium. Cunliffe emphasizes the tepidarium's role in enhancing social interactions, as its heated benches and inviting environment served as a venue for relaxed conversations and intellectual discourse. Esteemed figures such as scholars, poets, and philosophers often visited the baths, creating opportunities for bathers to engage in enriching dialogues and acquire insights from prominent thinkers (Cunliffe 1969). Additionally, Todd highlights the tepidarium's contributions to biological health. Bathers typically began their experience in the tepidarium to gradually elevate their body temperature and promote sweating. This practice was thought to facilitate the opening of pores, purify the skin, and remove toxins from the body (Todd 2005).

Archaeological findings related to the complex bathing structures of Greco-Roman civilization suggest that lukewarm temperatures, referred to as *tepidus* in Latin, carry favorable implications. This is attributed to their role in facilitating transitions, enhancing social interactions, and providing health advantages. This article challenges the notion that the lukewarm temperature, referred to as *tepidus*, is the reason for the Son of Man's act of vomiting or ἐμέσαι particularly considering the insights provided by recent archaeological findings. The research posits that the nature of the Laodicea water responsible for this reaction warrants further examination. Someone may argue that vomit or ἐμέσαι is related to drinking and not bathing! This research responds to that argument in two distinct manners. Initially, while lukewarm water is examined within the framework of Greco-Roman bathing practices, archaeological findings suggest that it should not be dismissed as devoid of benefits. Furthermore, the subsequent section of this article will extend the discussion to include biological evidence supporting the health advantages associated with the intake of lukewarm water.

Current research underscores the health advantages associated with lukewarm water consumption.[1] Kilroe, McAtee, and McReynolds have identified warm water as a potential treatment for food bolus impaction, suggesting it could serve as a cost-effective, low-risk, and non-invasive adjunctive therapy with anecdotal evidence of efficacy. This approach to alleviating esophageal food bolus impaction may be particularly beneficial in settings with limited resources and in situations where endoscopic procedures are not feasible (Kilroe, McAtee, and McReynolds 2024, e27–e28). The intake of warm water has been shown to significantly decrease esophageal food retention and enhance the quality of esophageal preparation (Yoon et al. 2022, 231–36). Furthermore, the advantages of warm water extend beyond human health, as Spinu, Degen, and Rosenstrauch have demonstrated its positive effects on the performance and immune responses of broiler breeder hens (Spinu, Degen, and Rosenstrauch 1993, 361–66). The existing literature on warm water suggests that there is various health advantages associated with its consumption. This leads to the interpretation that the Son of Man's act of vomiting, or ἐμέω, is not attributable to the temperature of the water, whether warm or lukewarm, but rather to the intrinsic qualities (the nature) of the water itself. The assertion regarding the intrinsic qualities of the water that lead to the Son of Man's vomiting is substantiated by both inscriptional and historical evidence, which will be elaborated upon in the following paragraph.

In 2015, a remarkable archaeological find was made with the unearthing of a marble block inscribed with the water law. This

[1] While lukewarm water presents certain benefits, Cutter argues that it can induce upward peristalsis or vomiting. He suggests that lukewarm water may lead to nausea and provoke upward peristalsis (Cutter 1883, 5). This conclusion supports the notion that the temperature of lukewarm water plays a significant role in its effects, especially to understand Rev 3:16. Conversely, Cutter also notes that cold water can result in discomfort, pain, and colic. In summary, he expresses a clear opposition to both cold and lukewarm water. Thus, Cutter's conclusion cannot be used to interpret Rev 3:16 since Jesus clearly encourages the church of Laodicea to be either cold or hot. It does not make sense if Jesus wants the church to be discomfort, pain, and colic. This conclusion does not fit the context of Rev 3:14–22.

legislation, enacted in 114 CE, meticulously governed the utilization of water transported from the mountains to Laodicea. It stipulated harsh financial penalties ranging from 5,000 to 12,500 denarii for individuals who polluted the water, damaged the channels, or tampered with sealed water pipes. The law was formulated by the city's assembly of citizens and subsequently submitted for ratification to the Roman governor, Aulus Vicirius Matrialis (Chia 2024, 121). The picture below (personal inventory) is the picture of water law.

Figure 1.

Adjacent to this inscription, a board displays a translation of the Greek text in Turkish on the left side and in English on the right side. The inscription provides significant insights. Firstly, it indicates that Laodicea possesses an ample supply of water, as noted by the statement that the revered and unparalleled Emperor Nerva Trajan Caesar Augustus Germanicus Dacicus has brought abundant water from plentiful sources. Secondly, despite this water abundance, there exists a curator responsible for monitoring the water's

quality. The appointed curator, Iunius Klaros, subsequently urges the distinguished Cornelius Tacitus, the proconsul, and Saenius Sabinus, the *legatus*, to enhance the utilization of the city for those granted royal privileges, as well as for all others who have historically engaged with the city. Two Roman curators, dressed in attire suitable for overseers of water resources, inspected a public fountain. The first curator consulted his wax tablet and made notes with his stylus, while the second curator sampled the water. During their duties, the second curator suggested they switch roles, believing the task to be simple; however, the first curator declined to taste the water himself. Subsequently, the first curator insisted that the second curator continue tasting the water from fountain 471. After sampling it, the second curator vomited and became ill, prompting the first curator to document that the water quality of fountain 471 was deemed unsafe. Throughout the week, they inspected three fountains, all of which were found to be contaminated. It corresponds to the definition in *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament* which interprets χλιαρός as unpleasant water, which led to the second curator experiencing nausea and vomiting (BDAG 1979). This indicates that the above-mentioned lexicon emphasizes the quality or nature of the water rather than its temperature (see Chia 2024, 121; cf. Iza 2017). Again, this historical evidence claims that the nature (or the quality) of Laodicea water that causes the Son of Man to vomit (Rev 3:16). This suggests that the inherent quality of Laodicea's water is rather poor, necessitating the oversight of a curator to assess and regulate its use appropriately. The stringent regulations reinforce the argument presented in the inscription that the primary concern in Laodicea is the substandard quality of its water, rather than temperature. The inscription indicates that the local government oversees the utilization of municipal water, imposes fines on those who violate the established rules, and designates officials to continuously monitor the water quality.

The characteristics of Laodicea's water correspond with the framework of the Son of Man's critique, wherein he utilizes the outward prosperity of Laodicea to highlight its deficient internal state (Rev 3:14–22). The following is a concise overview of the framework underlying the Son of Man's critique.

Table 1.

	External	Internal
Financial	Laodicea is Rich (3:17)	Laodicea is Poor (3:17–18)
Clothing	Laodicea has the most extensive textile industry, sharing this distinction with Colossae.	Laodicea is Naked (3:17–18)
Eyes	Laodicea is home to a highly esteemed medical school specializing in ophthalmology, recognized for its exceptional Phrygian eye powder and distinguished ophthalmologists, including the notable Demosthenes Philalethes.	Laodicea is Blind (3:17–18)
Status	Laodicea is a center for trade and economic activities.	Laodicea is Wretched (3:17)
Condition	Laodicea's wealth is evidenced by its luxurious residences, magnificent temples, and lavish public structures.	Laodicea is Miserable (3:17)
Water	Temperature (3:16)	Nature (3:16)

The table above reveals that the Son of Man employs the metaphor of drinking water to admonish the church of Laodicea, as it conveys two critical aspects: temperature and nature. The Son of Man critiques the superficial characteristics of Laodicea, which is characterized by a tepid temperature. The works of Origen and Didymus elucidate the perils associated with this lukewarm state, highlighting its inherent deceitfulness (Tzamalikos 2013, 13). Individuals typically respond with heightened awareness when confronted with hot or cold water; conversely, lukewarm water often goes unnoticed and unexamined. This tepid water serves as a metaphor for the deceit and hypocrisy prevalent within the Laodicean church. While the congregation may remain oblivious to their own moral failings, the Son of Man possesses a clear understanding of the underlying deceit that characterizes Laodicea or οἶδά σου τὰ ἔργα (Rev 3:15) because he is ὁ ἀμήν, ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστὸς καὶ ἀληθινός, ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ (Rev 3:14). The Son of Man, therefore, admonishes the church in Laodicea to avoid being tepid or engaging in deceitfulness.

The last argument is derived from ancient witnesses.[2] Hedychrous, a notable individual in Laodicea, is recognized for his significant contributions to the enhancement of the city's water quality through the development of its water system. His achievements are commemorated in various inscriptions, which offer important insights into his role as a benefactor. One such inscription, identified as *I.Laod.* 13.1–4, captures Hedychrous's proclamation: "Hedychrous built me and named me 'Hedychrous.'" This assertion not only emphasizes his active participation in the construction of a water-related facility but also reflects his pride in the endeavor. The name "Hedychrous," meaning "sweet complexioned," holds particular importance as it symbolizes the transformation of the water from its previously inferior state to a more appealing and acceptable quality. By naming the structure after himself, Hedychrous ensured that his contributions would be remembered for future generations, thereby cementing his legacy as a benefactor. The designation

[2] There are several challenges that counter the arguments in favor of nature. These challenges assert that Laodicea was famous for its exceptional water quality. The first challenge comes from a benefactor named Hedychrous contributed his name to a portion of the city's water infrastructure established in the first century. His name, meaning "sweet complexioned," cleverly underscored the attractive characteristics of the water provided to the city (*I.Laod.* 13; Corsten 1997, 49). The second challenge is derived from an inscription dating from the fourth or fifth century referring to a fountain house in Laodicea that offered "sweet clear water" (*I.Laod.* 11). The third challenge is proposed by Strabo that remarked that the rivers near Laodicea were like those of Hierapolis in their high mineral content, noting that "although their water is drinkable" (*potimos*; *Geographica* 13.4.14). This suggests that Strabo regarded Laodicea's water as suitable for drinking, unlike that of Hierapolis, which was not. The last challenge comes from a Jewish apocalyptic writer referred to "Laodicea… by the wonderful water of the Lycus" (*Sibylline Oracles* 3:471–72). Together, these references imply that the imagery in Revelation does not directly pertain to the quality of the local water supplies (Koester 2003, 409–11). This article, in contrast, addresses and counters those objections. For instance, the *Sibylline Oracles* 3:471–72 does not mention the water of Laodicea, particularly its quality. Rather, this passage discusses the geographical position of Laodicea, which is located along the Lycus River and at the intersection of Lydia, Caria, and Phrygia. Laodicea experienced significant devastation due to wars and earthquakes (Terry 1890, 30). Therefore, Koester erroneously cites *The Sibylline Oracles* 3:471–72.

of the structure as "Hedychrous" stands as a testament to the enhanced water quality resulting from his efforts. The phrase "sweet complexioned" conjures images of purity and refinement, indicating that the water flowing through the system was no longer harsh or unpalatable. This improvement would have significantly impacted on the daily lives of Laodicea's inhabitants, providing them with better access to clean and drinkable water. Hedychrous's involvement in the water system, originally established in the first century, illustrates his dedication to addressing the city's needs and enhancing its infrastructure. Furthermore, Hedychrous's role as a benefactor transcends the physical enhancements he made to the water system. In the context of the ancient world, benefactors were individuals who utilized their wealth and influence to promote the public good, often financing construction projects, festivals, or other civic endeavors. By improving the water quality in Laodicea, Hedychrous not only tackled a vital public health concern but also contributed to the overall well-being of the city. In short, the inadequate water quality in Laodicea presented a considerable obstacle for its residents; however, Hedychrous played a crucial role in mitigating this problem. His initiatives to enhance the city's water infrastructure resulted in a significant improvement, transforming the water from an unpleasant state to a more acceptable one, as indicated by the inscription that designated the structure as "Hedychrous." His efforts not only improved the living conditions for the people of Laodicea but also positioned him as a benefactor whose influence is recognized in historical accounts. The narrative of Hedychrous serves as a compelling illustration of the profound effect that individuals can exert on their communities through acts of kindness and civic engagement.

Secondly, evidence from inscriptions in Laodicea, particularly those related to the construction and maintenance of aqueducts, offers substantial proof of the substandard quality of the water. One inscription, dating back to the fourth or fifth century, opens with the phrase: "To good fortune! We, the nymphs of the spring, possess the sweet, clear water of the Aidiskos" (*I.Laod.* 11.1–2). Although this inscription seems to celebrate the water's purity, a more thorough analysis reveals a contrast between the idealized depiction

and the actual poor quality of the water. The Laodicean inscriptions provide comprehensive records of the development, maintenance, and enhancement of the city's water supply system over time. These documents indicate that local officials and benefactors allocated considerable resources to reforming the aqueducts and addressing the water's deficiencies. For example, inscriptions frequently honor individuals who financed repairs or improvements to the water system, emphasizing the ongoing necessity for enhancements. The repeated nature of these reforms implies that water quality was a chronic concern. Had the water been inherently pure and drinkable, there would have been a minimal need for continuous investment in the infrastructure. Instead, the inscriptions illustrate a consistent pattern of intervention, highlighting the inadequate state of the water and the requirement for regular upgrades. The improvements made to Laodicea's water supply system further support the assertion of poor water quality. The construction of aqueducts, the implementation of filtration systems, and the upkeep of pipelines all indicate efforts to alleviate the water's undesirable traits. Such enhancements would not have been required if the water had been naturally fit for consumption. The evidence derived from the inscriptions of Laodicea clearly indicates that the quality of water in the city was substandard, prompting the need for ongoing reforms and enhancements to the water supply infrastructure. The idealized depiction of the Aidiskos stream within the inscription underscores the gap between the aspired and the actual conditions of the water. Furthermore, the comprehensive descriptions of construction and maintenance activities emphasize the difficulties encountered by the city in tackling this significant concern. For local officials, these inscriptions provide a historical insight: the inadequate water quality in Laodicea demanded persistent focus and investment, and such commitment is essential in any community to guarantee access to clean and safe water.

Thirdly, while the esteemed ancient Greek geographer, Strabo, indicates that the water in Laodicea is potable (*Geographica* 13.4.14), this does not necessarily imply that its quality is satisfactory. Strabo highlights the difficulties that Laodicea encountered concerning its water resources. In *Geographica* 14.1.42, he provides insights

into various cities in Asia Minor, including Laodicea. This section elaborates on the geographical and infrastructural aspects of the area, highlighting the difficulties Laodicea encountered with its water resources. Strabo indicates that the city sourced its water from distant locations, which were of inferior quality. Unlike neighboring cities such as Hierapolis, known for its hot springs, and Colossae, celebrated for its cold, fresh water, Laodicea was devoid of natural springs that could provide high-quality water. While Strabo does not delve deeply into the specifics of Laodicea's water quality as later authors or archaeological studies might, he does emphasize that the city relied on an aqueduct system to transport water from afar, resulting in a supply that was often lukewarm and laden with minerals, thus less desirable. Thus, the comprehensive reading of *Geographica* indicates that Laodicea water quality is less satisfactory.

The Son of Man utilizes the temperature of water in Laodicea to illustrate the church's external condition, while the characteristics of the water serve to highlight its internal state. This analysis demonstrates that the quality of drinking water in Laodicea poses significant health risks, potentially leading to vomiting or illness. Consequently, the Laodicean authorities are compelled to appoint two curators to inspect each public fountain to ascertain the potability of the water. The vivid imagery of the Son of Man expressing that he is about to vomit, as stated in 'μέλλω σε ἐμέσαι ἐκ τοῦ στόματός μου' (Rev 3:16), unmistakably signifies the unwholesome nature of Laodicean water. The internal state of the Laodicean church is such that it causes distress to the Son of Man, their Lord. In summary, the lukewarm temperature of the drinking water symbolizes the church's deceitfulness, which obscures its sins and moral failings. Furthermore, the inherent qualities of this lukewarm water reflect the church's internal corruption. This moral decay is poignantly illustrated in Rev 3:20, where the Son of Man states that he stands at the door and knocks, indicating that the Laodicean church has effectively excluded him, leaving him outside and seeking reentry.

5. Implications

This article presents an alternative interpretation of the term χλιαρός in Rev 3:16, examining it from the perspectives of temperature and nature. The term χλιαρός reflects the outward appearance of the Laodicean church, which appears commendable: its members are active within the church and serve the Lord. However, this outward facade conceals a deeper deceit within the Laodicean community. They utilize their seemingly positive external conduct to mask their detrimental internal state. Consequently, the Son of Man confronts their duplicity by invoking the metaphor of lukewarm water. He further critiques their internal condition, which is symbolized by the characteristics of lukewarm water. The water of Laodicea is inherently unsafe and perilous, leading to the Son of Man's visceral reaction of vomiting, indicative of His revulsion. In essence, the Son of Man calls upon the Laodicean church to acknowledge and rectify both their external and internal lives (Rev 3:19: 'ἐγὼ ὅσους ἐὰν φιλῶ ἐλέγχω καὶ παιδεύω· ζήλευε οὖν καὶ μετανόησον').

6. Conclusion

Is χλιαρός in Rev 3:16 temperature or nature? This study presents an alternative interpretation of the term χλιαρός in Rev 3:16, suggesting that it should be understood in terms of both temperature and the characteristics of the water. While prior scholarship has predominantly focused on the temperature aspect, this article enhances that perspective through a linguistic analysis. Furthermore, it posits that χλιαρός in Rev 3:16 should be examined in relation to the qualities of the drinking water. Significant ancient testimonies and archaeological findings, particularly a notable marble block inscribed with water regulations, alongside a structural analysis of the Son of Man's critique in Rev 3:14–22, support the interpretation concerning the nature of Laodicea's drinking water. The temperature of the water reflects the external conditions of Laodicea, whereas the nature of the water conveys insights into the internal state of the church community.

Temperatura czy natura? Alternatywna interpretacja χλιαρός [chliarós] w Apokalipsie 3,16

Abstrakt: Czy χλιαρός w Ap 3,16 należy rozumieć jako temperaturę czy jako naturę? Dotychczasowe badania koncentrowały się głównie na aspekcie związanym z temperaturą. Niniejszy artykuł przedstawia inne spojrzenie na termin χλιαρός w Ap 3,16. Autor zakłada, że termin ten należy interpretować przez pryzmat temperatury i cech samej wody. Kluczowe odkrycia archeologiczne, w tym wybitny marmurowy blok z przepisami dotyczącymi wody, w połączeniu z badaniem strukturalnym napomnienia Syna Człowieczego w Ap 3,14–22 zostaną wykorzystane jako metodologia wspierająca argument, że χλιαρός obejmuje zarówno temperaturę, jak i inherentne właściwości wody.

Słowa kluczowe: Laodycea, letni, temperatura, natura, inskrypcje, analiza strukturalna

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