

What And Where Is the Futurist Gap in Dan 11?

Copyright (c) 2006 by Frank W. Hardy, Ph.D.

Introduction

Perhaps the most conspicuous characteristic of futurist exegesis in Dan 11, as regards the chapter's outline, is the existence of a historical gap separating events in the distant past from events in the near future.¹ There is widespread, though not general, agreement among futurists on the need for a gap, but its place in the chapter is a matter for discussion. Consider the following statement by Geoffrey R. King:

Most scholars agree as to the beginning and as to the end of this chapter, but there is a divergence of opinion concerning the middle. Obviously there is a gap somewhere, covering over 2,000 years, but where? 4,5? 20,21? 30,31? 35,36? In between these pairs of verses somewhere it must occur.²

One further possibility, overlooked by King, is mentioned by G. H. Lang: "Then at verses 34,35 the prediction passes on to the time of the end and the last emperor, the Antichrist."³

Variety of Viewpoint Concerning the Gap

Locating the gap in Dan 11 is an issue that rests on a number of prior considerations, and these must be dealt with before the original question can be adequately addressed. Before selecting the "right" verse division for a gap one must first learn what the possible alternatives are. The way futurists have proposed outlining the chapter must therefore be understood in detail. Then, after finding how expositors have grouped the outline fragments, it will be interesting to see how those fragments might serve to group their expositors. With the background supplied by such information it will be possible to give a clear answer to the related questions of whether, and if so where, any given commentator places the historical gap that has come to be associated with futurist exegesis of Daniel.

A synopsis of outline fragments proposed by futurist interpreters is given in table 1. It is clear from such a list of data that there is considerable divergence of opinion--in matters of detail--regarding a wide range of outline characteristics. The superficial nature of the differences, however, becomes clear in fig. 1, which states the information of table 1 in graph form and thus makes relationships among the various outline fragments subject to visual inspection.

Table 1
Futurist Outline Fragments Within Dan 11
and 12:1-3: Commentary References

Verses	Commentators
1, 2, 3-4	Baldwin 182, 185-86; Keil 423, 430, 432
1, 2-4	Johnson 82
1-2, 3-4	Ford 260-61; Walvoord 254, 256
2-20	Keil 430
5, 6, 7-9	Talbot 194
5-6, 7-9	Keil 433, 435
5-9	Baldwin 186; Keil 425; Wood 138
5-20	Johnson 83; Wood 138
5-45	Lang 157
10-12, 13-15, 16-19, 20	Keil 425, 437, 439-40, 443
10-19, 20	Leupold 485, 492
10-20	Baldwin 187; Wood 139
14-35	Ford*
21-23, 24-26, 27-28	Walvoord 264, 266
21-24, 25-28	Baldwin 192-93
21-24, 25-27, 28-32, 32-35	Keil 450, 453, 455, 458
21-24, 25-30a, 30b-35	Wood 141-42, 144
21-35	Ford*; Johnson 87; Lang 163; Leupold 493; Talbot 196; Wood 141
21-45	Baldwin 191
11:21-12:3	Keil 450
29-30, 31, 32-33, 34-35	Baldwin 194-96
29-31, 32-35	Walvoord 267-68
36, 37-39	Baldwin 197; Walvoord 270, 273
36-39	Keil 461, 463; Leupold 510; Talbot 202; Walvoord 270; Wood 146
36-45	Johnson 90-91; Keil 461; Walvoord 271; Wood 145
11:36-12:3	Keil 461; Leupold 510
40, 41-43, 44, 45	Baldwin 202-3
40, 41-45	Wood 147-48
40-43, 44-45	Keil 467, 472; Walvoord 277, 279
40-45	Baldwin 201; Keil 461, 469; Leupold 519; Wood 147

*"Ford Responds to Shea," *Spectrum* 11, 4 (1981):55.

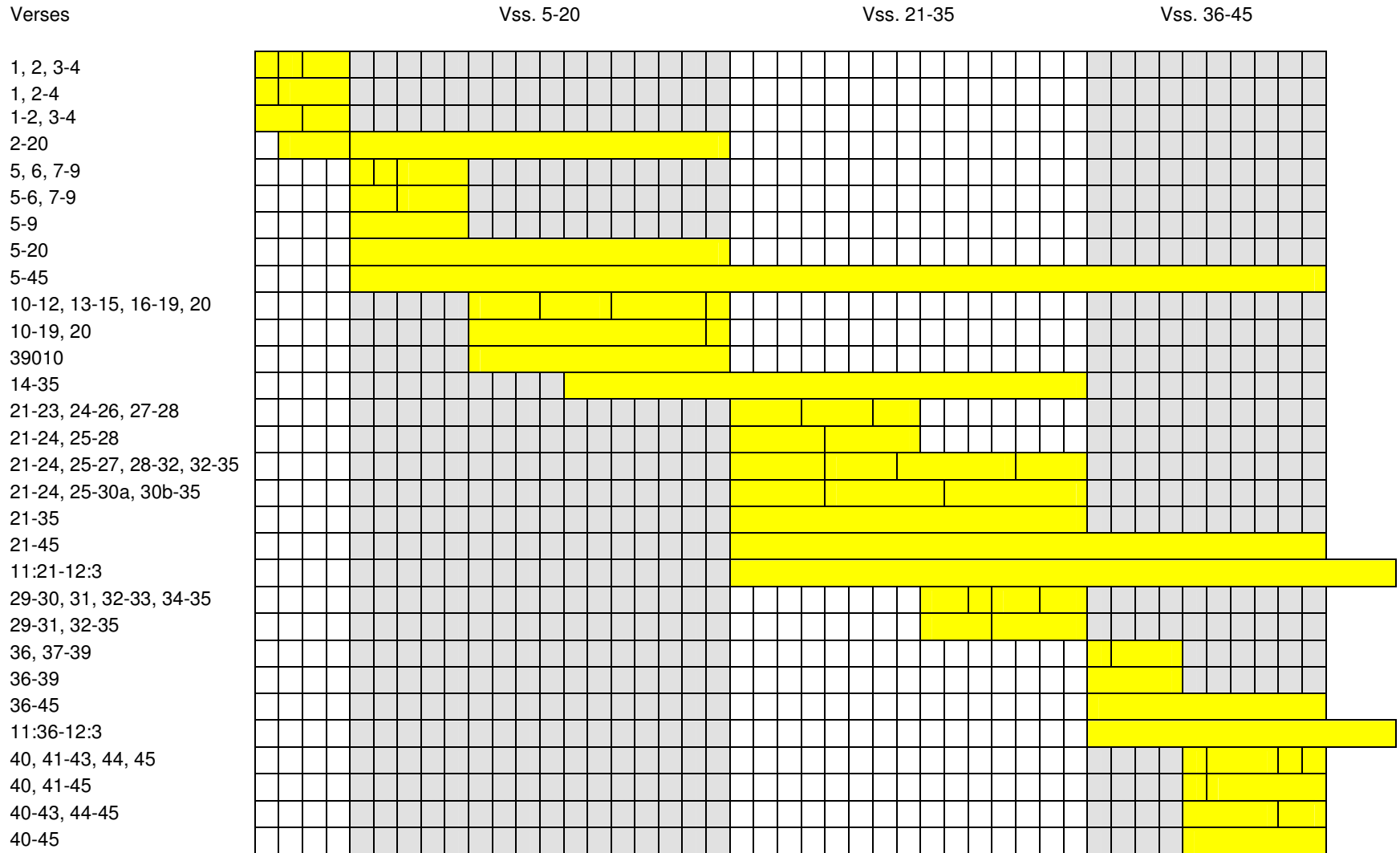


Fig. 1. Graphic representation of futurist outline fragments within Dan 11 and Dan 12:1-3, showing overall patterns.

Major sections that can be isolated on the basis of fig. 1 include at least vss. 5-20, 21-35, and 36-45. A further subdivision at vss. 39,40 is also possible, although it is not emphasized by all futurist scholars.⁴ Below I include the latter possibility and speak of four main blocs of text, consisting of vss. 5-20, 21-35, 36-39, and 40-45. Thus, one of King's four locations for the gap--vss. 30,31--is ruled out as a viable alternative, and so is Lang's suggestion concerning vss. 33,34. Verses 4,5, 20,21, and 35,36 are all prominently available, however, and vss. 39,40 should be kept in mind as a possibility.

Bloc 1: Vss. 5-20

Keil suggests that the main function of vss. 5-20 (or 2-20) is to bring the narrative up to vs. 21, where the part begins that holds primary interest. For him these preliminary verses are simply history. Keil states:

The description of this war [between the world-kingdom and the kingdom of God] as to its origin, character, and issue forms the principal subject of this prophecy. It is set forth in the revelation of the angel from ch. xi.21 to the end (ch. xii.3), while the preceding description, as well as the course of the Persian and Javanic world-kingdoms as of the wars of the kings of the north and the south (ch. xi.2-20), prepares for it.⁵

Apart from Lang, for whom vss. 5-45 are all future,⁶ futurists agree that the primary--in some cases exclusive--significance of vss. 5-20 lies in the past. For this reason vss. 21-45 will be the main object of inquiry below.

Blocs 2 through 4: Vss. 21-45

An overview of futurist positions on vss. 21-35, 36-39, and 40-45 is given in tables 2, 3, and 4, respectively. Only two writers, Lang included, place vss. 21-35 exclusively in the future.⁷ Keil considers these verses to be primarily future, but a majority would say they are either secondarily future⁸ or exclusively past.⁹

Tables 2-4, while making a needed contribution to the discussion, contain a mixture of views which it will be useful to factor out as it were. We begin doing this in table 5 (below), which restates and augments the material presented in tables 2-4. Table 5 lists in alphabetical order the expositors already cited. No new information is added in table 5.

Table 2
Futurist Interpretations
of Dan 11:21-35

Timeframe	Commentators
Past	Johnson, Walvoord
Past/Future	Baldwin, Ford, Talbot, Wood
Future/Past	Keil
Future	Lang, Leupold

Table 3
Futurist Interpretations
of Dan 11:36-39

Timeframe	Commentators
Past	. . .
Past/Future	Baldwin
Future/Past	Ford, Keil
Future	Johnson, Lang, Leupold, Talbot, Walvoord, Wood

Table 4
Futurist Interpretations
of Dan 11:40-45

Timeframe	Commentators
Past	. . .
Past/Future	Baldwin
Future/Past	. . .
Future	Ford, Johnson, Keil, Lang, Leupold, Walvoord, Wood

Table 5
Futurist Interpretations of Dan 11:21-45:
All Expositors in One Group

Commentators	Past	Past/Future	Future/Past	Future
Baldwin		21-45		
Ford		21-35	36-39	40-45
Johnson	21-35			36-45
Keil			21-39	40-45
Lang				21-45
Leupold	21-35			36-45
Talbot		21-35		36-45
Walvoord	21-35			36-45
Wood		21-35		36-45

In table 6 all futurist commentators in the sample are subdivided into two groups, depending on whether or not vs. 36 is *exclusively* future. At this point the resulting categories are called simply group 1 and group 2. See table 6 (below).

Table 6
Futurist Interpretations of Dan 11:21-45:
Expositors Divided into Two Groups

Commentators	Past	Past/Future	Future/Past	Future
Group 1				
Johnson	21-35			36-45
Lang				21-45
Leupold	21-35			36-45
Talbot		21-35		36-45
Walvoord	21-35			36-45
Wood		21-35		36-45
Group 2				
Baldwin		21-45		
Ford		21-35	36-39	40-45
Keil			21-39	40-45

In table 7 group 2 is itself subdivided. At issue is whether vs. 36 is interpreted as being *primarily* future. The three subdivisions within futurist thought are called groups 1, 2a, and 2b for now. This terminology will be refined at a later point.

Table 7
Futurist Interpretations of Dan 11:21-45:
Expositors Divided into Three Groups

Commentators	Past	Past/Future	Future/Past	Future
Group 1				
Johnson	21-35			36-45
Lang				21-45
Leupold	21-35			36-45
Talbot		21-35		36-45
Walvoord	21-35			36-45
Wood		21-35		36-45
Group 2a				
Ford		21-35	36-39	40-45
Keil			21-39	40-45
Group 2b				
Baldwin		21-45		

The most conspicuous patterns found in tables 6 and 7 are those formed by positions that are not taken. For example, in table 6 no group 1 futurist commentator suggests that any part of vss. 21-45 is secondarily future in its significance. Material that is not exclusively future is either exclusively past¹⁰ or secondarily past.¹¹ Similarly, no group 2 futurist commentator in table 6 suggests that any part of vss. 21-45 is exclusively past. Material that is not exclusively future for group 2 is either secondarily past¹² or secondarily future¹³. In table 7 group 2b interprets no part of the chapter as being exclusively future. Thus, group 2a does not use the category exclusively past, group 1 does not use the category primarily future, and group 2b does not use--among others--the category exclusively future.

Table 8 below now gives a simplified comparison of the positions of groups 1, 2a, and 2b regarding vss. 36-39 and 40-45. Note that vs. 36 is thought to be exclusively future by group 1, primarily future by group 2a, and secondarily future by group 2b. Verse 40 is thought to be exclusively future by groups 1 and 2a, but secondarily future by group 2b. The arrangement of table 8 is by groups of expositors.

The point concerning vs. 36 is especially important. In table 9 the same material as that in table 8 is arranged by groups of verses. From table 9 it can be seen that one's interpretation of vs. 36 is the only information needed to identify correctly the type of futurism with which any given commentator is associated.

Table 8
Patterns of Interpretation in Dan 11:36-45:
Arranged by Groups of Expositors

Commentators	Past	Past/Future	Future/Past	Future
Group 1				
Vss. 36-39				X
Vss. 40-45				X
Group 2a				
Vss. 36-39			X	
Vss. 40-45				X
Group 2b				
Vss. 36-39		X		
Vss. 40-45		X		

Table 9
Patterns of Interpretation in Dan 11:36-45:
Arranged by Groups of Verses

Commentators	Past	Past/Future	Future/Past	Future
Vss. 36-39				
Group 1				X
Group 2a			X	
Group 2b		X		
Vss. 40-45				
Group 1				X
Group 2a				X
Group 2b		X		

Toward a Definition of the Gap

If the above information is to be used in identifying a gap within Dan 11, it still remains for us to determine exactly what the defining characteristics of a gap are and therefore what sort of verse division provides the qualifications necessary to support a gap theory.

There are three kinds of future reference available (exclusive, primary, secondary) and three viable locations where a change in or to future reference might be considered significant

(vss. 21, 36, 40). A gap could therefore be said to occur as early as the point at which future reference of any type is introduced (down to and including a secondary level of emphasis), or as late as the point at which past reference of any type is left behind.

The above alternatives, however, do not exhaust the list of possibilities. A gap could also be said to occur at the point where the *bulk* of emphasis shifts from distant past to near future, whether or not a secondary time reference of either sort is also posited. In this case only two broad categories of future reference in Dan 11 would be needed to define a gap--one category that would take in both exclusive reference past reference and primary past reference on the one hand, and another that would take in both primary future reference and exclusive future reference on the other. A comparison of the terms just introduced and those used earlier is now given in table 10.

Table 10
Comparison of Terms

First Set	Second Set	Third Set
Past	Exclusively past	(Not future)
Past/Future	Primarily past	Secondarily future
Gap		
Future/Past	Secondarily past	Primarily future
Future	(Not past)	Exclusively future

It would be possible to make a case for either of the previous two alternative methods of defining a gap--allowing oneself to speak of a gap at the point where any kind of future reference is introduced, even future reference at a secondary level of emphasis, or insisting that no gap occurs until every bit of past reference is denied. In my opinion, however, the futurist gap is best defined as the point at which the bulk of emphasis abruptly shifts from a past setting (in the mid-second century B.C.) to a future one (in the late twentieth century A.D. or soon afterwards). Thus, the futurist gap may be said to occur wherever an expositor passes the line dividing the first two categories in table 10 from the second two.

A Suggested Typology of Futurist Expositors of Dan 11

Note carefully that only those commentators who claim that some part of Dan 11 applies exclusively in the future are here called dispensationalist futurists.¹⁴ Terminology is a problem here, but at the other end of the spectrum we propose classifying Baldwin as a liberal futurist.¹⁵ Baldwin alone, among the futurist writers consulted, places vss. 40-45 on the "past" side of table 3. Verses 36-39 and 40-45 for her are what in table 10 would be called "primarily past." Commentators in the sample who are neither liberal futurists nor dispensationalists will be called moderate futurists.¹⁶ For a summary of the above classifications see fig. 2.

Past	Preterist			
Past/Future	Futurist	Non-Dispensationalist	Liberal	Group 2b
Future/Past			Moderate	Group 2a
Future		Dispensationalist		Group 1

Fig. 2. Relationships among preterists and the three subgroupings of futurists, with special regard to the type of future reference proposed by each group at vs. 36.

With the above background now in place it is possible to address the question of who among futurists posit a gap in Dan 11, and if so where. By the definition offered in the previous section Lang, Talbot, Leupold, Johnson, Walvoord, and Wood (dispensationalist futurism/group 1), as well as Keil and Ford (moderate futurism/group 2a), do posit a gap. Baldwin (liberal futurism/group 2b) does not.

The gap proposed by dispensationalists represents a shift to future time reference in an exclusive sense, while that of moderate futurists represents a shift to future time reference in a primary sense. In order to distinguish between the positions of dispensationalist and moderate futurists on the gap, and to provide a means of talking about that distinction, I suggest calling the one view a "strong" gap and the other a "weak" gap. See table 11 (below).

Table 11
Summary of Futurist Commentaries

Author/Date	Gap		Page Reference to Comments on Specific Items				"Prince of the Covenant"	
	Strength	Location	Dan 11	Vs. 21	Vs. 36	Vs. 40	Vs. 22	Identity
Group 1								
Lang (1940)	Strong	Vs. 5	150-76	163	169	172	163	(Unspecified)
Talbot (1940)	Strong	Vs. 36	191-211	196	201	206	197	Ptolemy VI
Leupold (1949)	Strong	Vs. 36	470-525	493	510	519	495	Onias III
Johnson (1964)	Strong	Vs. 36	82-93	87	90	92	87	Onias III
Walvoord (1971)	Strong	Vs. 36	252-80	264	270	277	265	Onias III
Wood (1975)	Strong	Vs. 36	135-50	141	145	147	142	Onias III
Group 2a								
Keil (n.d.)	Weak	Vs. 21	423-74	450	463	467	451	(Unspecified)
Ford (1978)	Weak	Vs. 36	252-77	266	270	274	266-67	Onias III, Christ
Group 2b								
Baldwin (1978)	None	...	182-203	191	197	201	(191-92)	(Unspecified)

Conclusion

For Lang, within group 1, the gap comes at vs. 5, while for Talbot, Johnson, Walvoord, and Wood it comes at vs. 36. For Keil, within group 2a, the gap comes at vs. 21, for Ford at vs. 36. The gap at vs. 5 proposed by Lang, and at vs. 36 by Talbot, Johnson, Walvoord, and Wood, is a shift to future time reference in an exclusive sense; the gap at vs. 21 proposed by Keil, and at vs. 36 by Ford, is a shift to future time reference in a primary sense. The one group of commentators therefore posits a strong gap, the other a weak gap. A strong gap is characteristic of dispensationalist futurists, a weak gap is characteristic of moderate futurists. The liberal futurist camp (consisting only of Baldwin in the present sample) cannot be said to posit a gap at all. The location of the gap, therefore, for almost all those futurists who propose one, is vs. 36.

An overall summary of futurist sources which were consulted is now given in table 11. This summary includes a list of commentators, showing their group membership within futurism, the strength and location of the gap they posit, and page numbers for the entire treatment of Dan 11 as well as for the point in each commentary where the discussion of vss. 21, 36, and 40 begins. In addition I include the point where the discussion of vs. 22 begins, which makes a reference to the "prince of the covenant." Futurists generally apply the prince figure to Onias III, a high priest living in the second century B.C., and therefore have no reason to emphasize what is said about him. Historicists apply the figure to Christ. The matter will come up again in subsequent papers.

¹The present paper is based on Frank W. Hardy, "An Historicist Perspective on Daniel 11" (M.A. thesis, Andrews University, 1983), pp. 36-57.

²*Daniel: A Detailed Explanation of the Book* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), p. 228.

³*Histories and Prophecies*, p. 154. Lang is here reporting the views of B. W. Newton.

⁴C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.), vol. 9: *Ezekiel, Daniel*, p. 461; Philip C. Johnson, *The Book of Daniel: A Study Manual* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1964), pp. 90-91; John F. Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), p. 271; and Leon J. Wood, *Daniel: A Study Guide* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), pp. 146-47, all do posit vss. 39,40 as a major verse division within the chapter. But most futurists in the sample do not.

⁵Keil, *Ezekiel, Daniel*, p. 427.

⁶*Histories and Prophecies*, p. 157. This is the view Lang himself supports, following Tregelles.

⁷The other person who places vss. in the future is H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1949), p. 493.

⁸Joyce G. Baldwin, *Daniel: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1978), p. 191; Desmond Ford, *Daniel*, Foreword by F. F. Bruce (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1978), p. 266; Louis T. Talbot, *The Prophecies of Daniel, in Light of Past, Present, and Future Events* (Wheaton, IL: Van Kampen Press, 1940), p. 196; Wood (table 2).

⁹Johnson, Walvoord (table 2).

¹⁰Johnson, Leupold, Walvoord.

¹¹Talbot, Wood.

¹²Baldwin, Ford.

¹³Ford, Keil.

¹⁴Johnson, Lang, Leupold, Talbot, Walvoord, Wood.

¹⁵In "Historicist Perspective," p. 54 and elsewhere, I had originally proposed calling Baldwin an idealist futurist, because of Ford's use of the term. For Ford (*Daniel*, p. 68) the term "idealism" describes an approach that emphasizes "eternal truths about good and evil" rather than substantive details concerning the future and is closely associated with preterism. In a review of her commentary John G. Gammie, a preterist, observes that Baldwin's work is "sufficiently open and irenic to suggest that the day may be arriving when meaningful dialogue can transpire between evangelicals and higher critics" (Review of *Daniel: An Introduction and Commentary*, by Joyce G. Baldwin, in *Journal of Biblical Literature* 99 [1980]:453). It is true that of all the futurists in the present sample Baldwin's thought comes closest to that of her preterist colleagues. I now feel, however, that the term "idealist" would be misunderstood. Its connotations could be taken in a pejorative sense. Besides, the corresponding term "non-idealist/non-dispensationalist futurist" was unusually cumbersome.

¹⁶Ford, Keil.