SE-06 · ESSAY

Forum Shopping for the Apocalypse

AI eschatology as a jurisdictional maneuver

Essay · October 2026 · S. Harrison Knudson, J.D.

Who profits from the belief

Michael Brendan Dougherty asked in National Review why so many people decided the only two endings for artificial intelligence are extinction or abundance, and answered with the psychology of apocalypse. He is right about the believers. The question he leaves open is who profits from the belief. A cult has no lobbyists. An eschatology attached to trillions in capital has a great many.

A forum-selection clause

Every lawyer learns that jurisdiction is half the case. If the technology decides the fate of the species, the only competent tribunal is civilizational — summits, security councils, frontier-model licensing — not the state attorney general, the school board or the plaintiff's bar. The doom version ends in licensing only incumbents can afford. The paradise version ends in preemption.

Watch the forum move

In 2023 OpenAI's chief executive asked the Senate for a federal licensing agency. In 2025 he told the Senate that requiring government approval would be disastrous. That year the House passed a ten-year bar on state AI laws; the Senate struck it 99 to 1. The prophecy changed. The venue it pointed to never came down to earth.

Ordinary law looks petty

Next to the end of the world, ordinary law looks small, and that is the point. Contract, tort and the rules that already govern who may deal with whom are law a state legislature can enact in a single session and a county court can enforce, without waiting for a global framework. Those are exactly the rules an eschatology makes look like a rounding error.

This is not an allegation of a con; the believers are sincere. But sincerity tells you what a man believes, not whose interests his proposal serves. The end of the world is not a jurisdiction.

> The essay is short and was posted publicly in October 2026. It concedes that some AI risks are concrete and testable, and argues that those deserve plain rules too.