
LETTERS *to the* EDITOR

Can outrage in Afghanistan inspire us?

THE CONVICTION and pending execution of the Afghani student, Sayed Parwiz Kambakhsh, for blasphemy is an appalling circumstance, but it offers an opportunity that we should all seize ("Insult to Mohammed draws death penalty," Page A12, Jan. 24).

The time has come for Muslims to demonstrate that Islam is a great faith that has no need for violence or intimidation to maintain the loyalty of its congregation. And we outside Islam must make it clear that we cannot respect or honor a religion that would consider blasphemy a capital crime, no matter how ancient the tradition from which this decision flowed.

Muslims who support the conviction and sentence of Kambakhsh, or who refrain from condemning it, must be made to realize that they share responsibility for bringing dishonor to their cherished heritage, and if we non-Muslims do not speak out, we too must share in the blame.

Friends prevent friends from committing, or condoning, evil. The best way of showing our good will toward Islam is by helping it shed an indefensible aspect of its legacy. Every religion has much to atone for, but that is no reason to button our lips and tolerate fresh grounds for atonement.

DANIEL C. DENNETT

North Andover
