

Rowan Williams: I'm Sorry for 'Christians, Grow up' Comment

The former archbishop of Canterbury has apologized for saying British Christians who come under attack for their faith should "grow up."

Last week, Rowan Williams said being made to feel "mildly uncomfortable" is not persecution and that people who complain of facing such behavior should grow a thicker skin.

But on Monday, Williams said he understood "how offensive the words might sound to those who suffer bullying for their convictions or whose faith presents them with real and painful dilemmas in their professional lives."

The original comments came at the Edinburgh International Book Festival in a discussion with a senior rabbi.

Williams said that after any contact with "real persecuted minorities, you learn to use the word *persecuted* very chastely."

He commented, "I am always very uneasy when people sometimes in this country or the United States talk about persecution of Christians or, rather, believers."

"I think we are made to feel uncomfortable at times. We're made to feel as if we're idiots—perish the thought!

"But that kind of level of not being taken very seriously or being made fun of, I mean, for goodness' sake, grow up."

He said such difficulties should not be confused with systematic and "often murderous hostility."

But in a letter to *The Guardian* newspaper explaining the comments, Williams said he had in mind "those who offer what I

think are unduly sensationalized accounts of the situation—and, to a lesser extent, those in the public eye who have to put up with a certain amount of routine attack.”

But the former archbishop said he realized how offensive the words might sound to those who face difficulties.

“I want to make it clear that I’d regard urging such people to ‘grow up’ as insulting and insensitive to a degree, and apologize for giving any impression to that effect,” he said.