

Williams apologizes after saying Irish Catholics 'lost all credibility' "A rare breach of ecumenical protocol": "A rare breach of ecumenical protocol"

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The leader of the global Anglican Communion has been forced to apologize for claiming that the Catholic Church in Ireland had lost “all credibility” over the clerical child abuse scandal.

The Easter weekend dustup was triggered when Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams stated on BBC radio that recent sexual abuse revelations had been a “colossal trauma” for Ireland’s Catholic community.

The Irish government has issued several reports in the past year detailing a longstanding and wide-ranging cover-up of abuse of children in Catholic-run institutions.

With the Irish Catholic Church “suddenly losing all credibility,” said Williams, “that’s not just a problem for the church, but for everybody in Ireland.”

The *Times* newspaper in London labeled Williams’s declaration “a rare breach of ecumenical protocol,” as Catholic fury exploded, forcing the archbishop to telephone Irish Catholic leaders to express his “deep sorrow and regret” over his remarks.

Williams’s office at Lambeth Palace in London insisted “the archbishop had no intention of criticizing or offending the Roman Catholic Church as a whole.”

However, there were growing fears that the revelations about abusive Catholic priests—referenced in Williams’s remarks—could become a major issue ahead of a four-day visit to Britain by Pope Benedict XVI, now scheduled for September. –

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