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Pacifists Misinterpret the Bible, Russian Orthodox Leader Says

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Alexander Avilov / Moskva News Agency

The head of Russia's Orthodox Church has said the modern pacifist movement misunderstands Jesus Christ's sermon about turning the other cheek.

"If we confine ourselves to these words ["if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also"], we could draw the wrong conclusions from a literal interpretation," Patriarch Kirill said Sunday.

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Pacifists, Patriarch Kirill told believers, "completely ruled out the possibility of armed resistance, even in response to aggression" and point others to this verse as justification.

"An apostle's reading of this day gives us the correct interpretation of the Lord's commandment: 'Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure'," he said.

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Citing Paul the Apostle’s words in the New Testament, Patriarch Kirill said “we should never respond to evil with [more] evil in order to stop evil.”

“It’s also obvious that one should never submit or bow one’s head to evil,” Patriarch Kirill said at a church consecration in southern Moscow.

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