

Paper Presented at

AMSS 34th Annual Conference

**Cosponsored by
Temple University, Philadelphia, PA
September 30 – October 2, 2005**

Abstract Only – Work in Progress

“Just War Theory in the Christian Tradition: Principles, Problematic Areas and Prospects for Dialogue with Islamic Thought”

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This paper will briefly outline the basic principles and major historical proponents of “just war” theory in the Christian tradition from St. Ambrose and St. Augustine in the fourth century C.E. to its contemporary form. It will also highlight some of the major shifts and developments in the “just war” theory in the Christian tradition, such as the historical emphasis on obedience to governments in power, to Aquinas’ claim that rebellion against unjust regimes can, in some instances, be morally licit. It will also discuss some of the more disputed areas within such contemporary “just war” thinking as whether or not the legitimate authority to declare war resides with a nation-state or an international body such as the United Nations, as well as the question of *jus ante bellum*, or justice after war, the viability of the principle of discrimination in modern warfare and the very usefulness of “just war” theory today. The final portion of this paper addresses contemporary Islamic thought on war and peace, by showing that there is a diversity of opinions concerning the amount of convergence between Christian and Islamic thought. It will also make mention of the reformist thought of contemporary Islamic scholar Abdullahi Ahmed An-Naim as a resource for dialogue between Muslims and Christians.