

## **PEOPLE LIKE US**

*On the eve of Refugee Week 19-25 June, Roland Parker reflects on the meaning of being a migrant*

The Bible is constantly reminding its readers of where they have come from. It is constantly telling of those times when the people of Israel found themselves migrants. This was either forced by escape and conquest, the exodus and the exile, or by choice, when they settled into Canaan. The writers remind the settled of those times when they were in need and dependent on others for their survival.

Young babies arrive like migrants who have to work out where and who they are. Fortunately most of us were provided with an environment that allowed us to gain sense of things. We soon forget just how long we were dependent on the support of others for our own development. As we age, we may have to admit to ourselves our need for being dependent on others again. Being "a migrant" may simply show us how we all are as human beings. Immigrants in the news just remind us of our natural state.

Perhaps if we could see migrants as "people like us" this might help us to respond less paternally. If there is no obvious way to help, then what is needed is just to be more deeply aware and to show some compassion for their plight.

Migrants may always have been a problem. They may not simply fit in with a settled way of life. Yet they can have a validity of life that may open our eyes to seeing ourselves afresh.

For people of faith, migrants remind us that we are on a pilgrimage. We can be tempted to circle the wagons and settle down for the night, forgetting that it is the journey that counts. In all their journeying, migrants remind us that we are all travelling in hope.

In the word of the hymn

One more step along the road I go  
From the old things to the new  
Keeping me travelling alone with you.