

These are all texts about ‘seeing’: seeing more clearly; more deeply; with greater understanding; with wisdom. But to see like this one has to be present – aware – on guard – attentive to one’s surroundings. I had the privilege, on Thursday, of seeing in the sky something I had never seen before. I wasn’t expecting anything in particular. It was day of very strong winds and clouds scudding across the sky from west to east with intervals of sunshine in-between. My practice as a bird-watcher is to keep looking to left and right and up and down as I walk: it’s become second nature so that I don’t even realise I’m doing it. But there were few birds to be seen - all hunkered down out of the wind’s blast, but as I came over the bridge facing Grindstone Hill there was a strange light in the sky: a sort of diffused rainbow in two parts, fanning out towards the north east. The sun was low to the right but an hour or so away from sunset; coloured clouds high overhead in the afternoon, well above the layer of racing clouds below? Fortunately, the *Guardian* had featured the phenomenon in that day’s paper. Nacreous clouds rarely seen this far south caused by tiny ice crystals scattering the light and a sign of very cold polar air drifting in from the north at great height and requiring a temperature of at least 58 degrees centigrade to form. I’d read that these resembled mother-of pearl and, sure enough, this was the-effect directly over the sun but it took some looking and care – no looking directly at the sun. It was all very exciting. Then two walkers appeared to my left, one looking straight ahead and the other, head down, reading his phone. They came nearer. I couldn’t resist showing my excitement and so I said to the first: *Look! There are very rare clouds up there! See, the colours are just about to disappear again behind the lower clouds.* He looked, *Oh yes,* he said – and carried on. His companion was too late: a brief glance and then it was back to the phone. And, as they carried on, I heard him say to the other: *Clouds!* in a scornful tone. He didn’t know what he’d missed. It’s all about seeing.

If you want an explanation of how this connects with Christmas Day, read the texts again, slowly, carefully, with eyes and ears open and hear and see God.

You can get the same effect by being fully present to one another.

And you can see Christmas in the same light too.

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