

happiness and fulfillment, fairness, freedom, openness, cooperation, and community development. These are the values of strong progressive politics. Though the stereotype is again heterosexual, there is nothing in the nurturant family model to rule out same-sex marriage.

In a society divided down the middle by these two family models and their politics, we can see why the issue of same-sex marriage is so volatile. What is at stake is more than the material benefits of marriage and the use of the word. At stake are one's identity and most central values. This is not just about same-sex couples. It is about which values will dominate in our society.

When conservatives speak of the "defense of marriage," liberals are baffled. After all, no individual's marriage is being threatened. It's just that more marriages are being allowed. But conservatives see the strict father family, and with it their political values, as under attack. They are right. This is a serious matter for their politics and moral values as a whole. Even civil unions are threatening, since they create families that cannot be traditional strict father families.

Progressives are of two minds. Pragmatic liberals see the issue as one of benefits—inheritance, health care, adoption, and so forth. If that's all that is involved, civil unions should be sufficient—and they certainly were an advance. Civil unions provided equal material protection under the law. Why not leave civil unions to the state and marriage to the churches, as in Vermont, the first state of many to adopt civil unions and later same-sex marriages?

Idealistic progressives saw beyond the material benefits, important as they are. Most gay activists want full-blown marriage, with all its cultural meanings—a public commitment based on love, all the metaphors, all the rituals, joys, heartaches, family experiences—and a sense of normality, on par with all other people. The issue is one of personal freedom: The state should not dictate who should marry whom. It is also a matter of fairness and human dignity. Equality under the law includes social and cultural as well as material benefits. The slogan here is "freedom to marry."

Back in 2004, when the first edition of *Don't Think of an Elephant!* was