

Sin-Smellers

It was not the first serious music about coffee but the most famous ode to the black bean juice was Bach's 1732 *Secular Cantata Number 211*: "The Coffee Cantata." Even dour and sour commentator Albert Schweitzer conceded that the piece, like coffee, was "totally refreshing." It is ironic that it was composed during the 18th Century, when a German king expressly forbade the drinking of coffee for commoners. In fact, he was so intent on hoarding coffee for the elite that he employed *Kaffeeriechers* (**coffee-smellers**) who would wander the streets sniffing out offenders. They were paid a percentage from their busts, so their efforts were intense and personal.

This sounds strangely similar to the misplaced efforts of some Christians, whose loyalty to the King and their desire to maintain purity in the church compels them to be *sin-smellers*. In their pursuit of "something wrong" they spin negativity and hatred toward everything and everyone. They have a sweet tooth for juicy gossip and character assassination, and rarely verify the so-called "facts."

Christians understand their duty to expose error (Ephesians 5:11) and mark divisive people (Romans 16:17) but there are enough issues to deal with in the church without people becoming religious muckrakers, busybodies "*in other men's matters*" (1 Peter 4:15). Worker-servants in the body of Christ, whose concentration and focus is about the Lord's business, will not have time to sniff out offenders. Preaching and teaching the Gospel to a lost and dying world (Colossians 1:28), living a quiet and peaceful Christian life (1 Timothy 2:2), and transforming personal lives in Christ (Romans 12:1-2) will keep Christians busy, and to spare, with their own growth. Then, when the Light exposes sin in the normal course of Christian living, it can be dealt with appropriately, lovingly, and scripturally. We do not need *sin-smellers*.