

condition of our congregations respecting this matter, and respecting the progress of temperance in their respective districts.— And while this committee have to express gratification and thanks that the brethren written to have in almost every instance readily and satisfactorily responded, yet they regret that they are not able to lay before the Synod as full and definite information as they desired, and at the outset anticipated. They did indeed expect to have obtained such information as would have enabled them to report to Synod the number of communicants in our several congregations who were pledged and persevering teetotalers. But in consequence of the inability of many of our ministers to give a definite answer to the question sent them on this point, they are unable to give a precise report on the subject. For while they are gratified to learn by some of the answers returned that “a good many,” that “a great majority,” that “nearly all,” their communicants are total abstinents, yet this does not assist much to ascertain the precise number. Still less assistance is afforded in this matter by those that reply, “I cannot say,” “I do not know,” “it is uncertain.” In this, however, there is great room for encouragement, as some of the brethren have informed the committee of the precise number, and others resolve to make minute inquiries at the next annual visitation of their congregations; and your committee are of opinion that if each minister were to make this subject a matter of special inquiry when conducting pastoral visitations, it would assist in ascertaining what proportion of our communicants were total abstinents, would furnish our pastors with excellent opportunities of impressing this duty on the minds of their people, and bring our people more generally to see how earnestly the Synod desire and labor to promote the cause of total abstinence.

Your committee are gratified to learn that as far as our communion is concerned the traffic in intoxicating liquors is becoming small by degrees and beautifully less. In a large number of our congregations not a single communicant, or a person regarded as an ordinary hearer in our church, takes any part in the manufacture or sale of intoxicating liquors for beverage purposes, either as responsible heads or as subordinates in business establishments. From the wide-spread bounds of our church in these Lower Provinces, the committee have been able to learn of only two or three dozen of persons who are ordinary hearers in our congregations, that take upon themselves the fearful responsibility of retailing ardent spirits as a means of increasing their pecuniary gains at the risk of injuring their fellow-men and spreading crime and wretchedness through the community in which

they reside. Less than a dozen of our communicants are reported to have some connexion with such establishments in a subordinate capacity, but we may charitably hope that the most of these, had they the entire control, would readily terminate this degrading traffic as far as they are concerned. For even they must at times feel the manifest inconsistency of taking their seats at the table of the Lord and vowing to wage war against every known sin, and going out into the world and giving their influence to uphold that system of iniquity, the effect of which is to convert sober men into drunkards, who shall forever be excluded from the kingdom of heaven. But so completely is the communion of the church purged from this evil, that so far as the committee have been able to ascertain throughout the bounds of this Synod, there are only two or three men who are at the same time communicants in the church and remain as responsible heads of business establishments in which ardent spirits are retailed for beverage purposes. This is certainly a great cause of thankfulness. When we consider the prospect of pecuniary advantage that this traffic holds out to those who are engaged in it in many districts of our country, we ought to be particularly thankful that those that are associated with us in christian fellowship are so generally able to resist the temptation, and to say, as for others let them do as they will, for us we will serve the Lord.

Your committee are also gratified to learn that in the great majority of our congregations the brethren are able to report progress in the temperance cause. A few tell of decided and marked progress. In some cases the whole community has been enlisted in this cause, either in congregational total abstinence societies or in some of the various temperance organizations that are prosecuting this work throughout the land. In a few places liquor is not sold at all, nor is drunkenness known. In a number of districts again, it is extremely difficult to say whether or not temperance is making any progress at all; and in some cases, while the societies appear to be holding their own, drunkenness outside is becoming alarmingly prevalent. In some communities within our bounds, especially where maritime commerce is extensively conducted, the drinking customs appear on the increase, temperance is making little or no progress, and many of the young men fall victims to this deplorable vice. This should certainly be a subject of great solicitude and prayerfulness; and while we deeply deplore the evil, special efforts should be employed to check the prevalence of this evil and save the young from the snares of the destroyer. O how earnest and diligent should our ministers, elders, and