

not war against them, then they "made their way", that is, they became guides and led the way for others along the path of virtue.<sup>7</sup> As they went, they plucked out all that was rooted in the earth and in earthly imagination. For if one does not first rest from the passions, and establish himself in quietness, he cannot lead others along the way and become a guide towards the good.

<sup>7</sup> Here Bl. Theophylact draws upon the double meaning of the verb *odopoiein*, to make one's way, and to lead the way.

## CHAPTER THREE

*Concerning the man with the withered hand.*

*On the choosing of the apostles.*

*Concerning His mother and brothers.*

1-5. And He entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there who had a withered hand. And they were watching Him, whether He would heal him on the sabbath day, that they might accuse Him. And He saith unto the man who had the withered hand, Arise and stand into the middle. And He saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? To save life, or to kill? But they were silent. And when He had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, He saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other. When the disciples were accused by the Jews of plucking the heads of wheat on the sabbath, the Lord refuted the accusers first by means of the example of David. But now He puts them to shame even more by working this miracle, pointing out, "Not only did My disciples not sin by plucking the heads of wheat, but even I Myself labor on the sabbath day by working a miracle. If it is bad to work a miracle on the sabbath, it is also bad simply to work for the necessities on the sabbath. But truly, to work a miracle to heal a man is of God, and surely he who does something good on the sabbath does not transgress the law." This is why the Lord asks them if it is lawful to do good, to shame them for hindering Him from doing good. The right hand is withered of anyone who does not do those deeds that belong to the portion on the right. And Christ says to the man with the withered hand, "Arise." Arise, that is, from sin and stand in the middle, which means, in the middle place of the virtues, the golden mean. For each virtue lies in the middle, inclining neither to omission nor to excess. Therefore when he stands at this golden mean, his hand will be restored whole and sound. Note the word "restored". For there was a time when our hands, that is, our strength to act, were sound, when there was not yet any transgression. But when the hand of man was stretched out to take the forbidden fruit, from that time on it withered and could not do good. But it will again be restored to its former health when we stand in the middle of the virtues.