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The San Giobbe altarpiece (Fig.1) is one of the most famous Venetian altarpieces and was executed by the great Venetian painter Giovanni Bellini (1434c.-1516). Since its exhibition to the public this work has been highly praised for its magnificent architectural settings or its rendering of elegant saints. Although many experts, including Giorgio Vasari and the contemporary literatus, have studied the San Giobbe altarpiece, its date and commission background remain unknown: art historians have attempted to address this issue by investigating the historical circumstances of the church of San Giobbe.

In this article, I consider the position of the San Giobbe altarpiece in relation to the decoration program of the church: this topic has not very often been discussed.

I. History of the Church of San Giobbe

The church of San Giobbe is situated in the north-west section of the capital island of Venice, Italy. Its history began with the foundation of an Ospizio (almshouse) by the Venetian nobleman, Giovanni Contarini (-1407) in 13781. In fourteenth century Venice, plague epidemics were common and wars against Padua or Genoa were fought: therefore, socially
vulnerable individuals were placed in a very difficult situations. It was in this social context that Giovanni Contarini, a highborn nobleman, founded an almshouse for poor, elderly people.

Although the church title of St. Job (San Giobbe), a blessed man in the Old Testament, is rather rare in the Roman Catholic cultural sphere, the foundation of this church as an almshouse for the elderly explains the use of this title. The Book of Job describes the life of Job, who suffered the trials of God in his old age and lost everything he had but never lost his faith: he was finally and richly rewarded and became an ideal role model for residents of the Ospizio.

In May 1383, the Venetian Republic recognized the establishment of a Scuola (confraternity) in the San Giobbe Ospizio and in 1390 a small Oratorio (chapel) was added to the establishment. The prototype of the religion-charity complex of San Giobbe was completed at that time.

In 1407 founder Giovanni Contarini died and was buried in the Oratorio. In his will he left all his belongings to the San Giobbe Ospizio and designated nine administrators to manage them. His last wish, however, was not executed directly. His daughter Lucia Contarini (-1447) challenged her father’s will and wished to participate in the management of the almshouse. She would not adhere to her property rights, but desired to establish a more robust organization so that the Ospizio did not to deplete her father’s eleemosynary estate. Lucia consigned the almshouse to the Observant order in 1428. This can be defined as the beginning of the

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2 Finotto, Ibid., p.11.
4 Although Lucia initially left the responsibility of the almshouse with Eremiti di San Girolamo, the management commission was returned three years later. As soon as this order began to act in San Giobbe, the monastery could be added to the establishment. Schmidt, op.cit., p.12.
middle period in the history of the church of San Giobbe.

With the development of the acts of the Observants, the church of San Giobbe was built around 1440: it encompassed the existing Oratorio. This primary church was built in gothic style\(^5\) and was designed by Antonio Gambello (1458-1481)\(^6\). In 1443, friar Bernardino of Siena sojourned in the monastery of San Giobbe and preached in the church\(^7\). He would take on a very important role in the history of the church of San Giobbe. He was a friar of the Observant and was greatly renowned as a transcendent preacher. Bernardino was canonized at the sixth anniversary of his death (1450), which marked unconventionally prompt treatment.

Venetian senator Cristoforo Moro (1390-1471) attended the church during the time that Bernardino preached in San Giobbe. Moro and Bernardino had become acquainted in Padua, and Bernardino had predicted that Moro would become the Doge (head of the Venetian Republic)\(^8\). While it is not certain whether this legendary prediction, which was realized at a later date\(^9\), was actually made by Bernardino, Cristoforo Moro deeply adored Preacher Bernardino of Siena. Moro’s affection for Bernardino would have a significant impact on the construction of the church of San Giobbe.

In 1451 and following Bernardino’s canonization, Moro donated the chapel of St. Bernardino of Siena to the church. This chapel was erected where the chancel is now located in the present church. It is possible that the title of the main chapel of the church was changed from St. Job to St. Bernardino at that time\(^10\). Thereafter marks the beginning of the drastic

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5. Today, the vestige of the early church can be seen at the lower part of the existing edifice. See Fig.2.
6. Gambello undertook the design of the church of San Zaccaria in Venice, which also possesses an altarpiece by Giovanni Bellini. He did not complete his gothic style church at that time. Mauro Coducci took over the project and in 1515 completed the church building in Renaissance style.
7. Richardson, op.cit., p.204. Richardson listed the documents on the church of San Giobbe in the Appendix 2 of his thesis.
reconstruction of the church of San Giobbe. Cristoforo Moro promoted these initiatives in praise of St. Bernardino after his predicted election to the Doge in 1462.\footnote{For instance, Moro promptly asked the Pope for permission to settle St. Bernardino as a patron saint of the Republic after his inauguration to the Doge. Finotto, op. cit., p.14.}

In 1470 and 1471, Moro, in the twilight of his life, donated many of his possessions to the church of San Giobbe and expressed his wishes for completion of the church reconstruction: he hoped to be buried in the tomb executed in the chancel. To fulfil this wish, the Lombardo family workshop, led by Pietro Lombardo (1435c.-1532) and his sons Antonio (1458 c.-1516) and Tullio (1460 c.-1532), was welcomed to Venice. It was through this Lombardian reconstruction that the church of San Giobbe acquired its present form. Construction continued after the death of Cristoforo Moro, and the church of San Giobbe was finally consecrated on April 14, 1493 in the names of St. Job and St. Bernardino. Thus, the presence of the great patron Cristoforo Moro influenced the change of title saint.\footnote{It is not clear when the change of the title saint from St. Job to the co-title of St. Job and St. Bernardino was settled. It may be possible that the title was changed soon after the dedication of the main chapel to St. Bernardino in 1451. It was at consecration in 1493 that the co-title saints appeared in the document for the first time.}

Following the church’s consecration, many important Venetian nobles such as the Sanudo family or the Foscari family dedicated marvellous altarpieces or chapel works to the church of San Giobbe, and Franciscan friars developed their charitable missions. After the decline of the Republic, however, the church was closed in 1810 and the monastery was demolished in 1812. After enduring several wars, the church of San Giobbe reopened in 1952 as a parish church and exists as such to this day.

II. The Church of San Giobbe at Consecration in 1493

In the abovementioned history of the church of San Giobbe, it is important to note the reconstruction executed according to the testament of

\footnote{For instance, Moro promptly asked the Pope for permission to settle St. Bernardino as a patron saint of the Republic after his inauguration to the Doge. Finotto, op. cit., p.14.}
Cristoforo Moro of 1470 and 1471. This reconstruction commenced in 1470 and finished around 1485\(^\text{\footnotesize{13}}\): it introduced the unified Lombardy motive to the facade and the inner space and resulted in a clear spatial composition in Renaissance style for the interior of the church (Fig.3). The gothic style windows were closed and five altars were founded on the right wall. Five chapels were constructed on the left. The main chapel, separated by the triumphal arch from the nave, was completed as the mausoleum of Doge Cristoforo Moro. These monuments were not erected immediately after the 1493 consecration. Only three monuments were supposed to be completed at that time, namely the main chapel in the chancel, the second chapel on the left wall (Martini chapel), and the second altar on the right wall\(^\text{\footnotesize{14}}\). These three monuments formed a triangle on the church plan (Fig.4).

### 1. The main chapel of San Giobbe (Fig.5)

The main chapel occupies the front half of the chancel and was dedicated to St. Bernardino of Siena as a result of the aforementioned events. The tomb of Cristoforo Moro was built on the floor just in front of the main altar and he was buried there in the costume of a Franciscan friar in 1471\(^\text{\footnotesize{15}}\).

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\(^\text{15}\) The tomb of Moro was completed in 1470. The inscription reads, ‘CHRISTOPHORVS MAVRVS PRINCEPS MCCCLXX MENSIS SEPTEMBIS’. The tombstone was simply decorated with botanical ornaments and Moro’s coat of arms. Humfrey mentioned that this attitude reflected the modesty of Cristoforo Moro, who was anxious about earning the reputation of vanity. However, the avoidance of admiration for individuals was very strong in Venice at this time, and it was uncommon to create a personal mausoleum in a main chapel. Regarding the use of the main chapel of San Giobbe to commemorate Cristoforo and his wife in their tomb, it should be noted that this is an extraordinarily personal and gorgeous monument in Venice. Peter Humfrey, Altarpiece in Renaissance Venice, New Haven and London, 1993, p.124, p.327, note 113.
Construction on the existing formation of the chapel with the modern Toscana style dome, which reflected the tastes of Moro, commenced in 1470 by Pietro Lombard and the work was completed until 1485. At the top of the hemispherical dome is God the Father. The medallions are located on the four corners of the pendentive, with four evangelists and angels holding them up rendered in relief. All of these decorate the geometrical space which comprises a circle and a square (Fig.6). The botanical ornaments on pilasters or capitals represent typical Lombardy style. The entrance of the chancel is formed by the triumphal arch. With two small chapels on both sides, three arches dominate the frontal composition of the chancel. The decorative iconography on the triumphal arch will be discussed later in this paper.

2. Martini chapel

Martini Chapel, the second chapel on the left wall, was built with the patronage of Venetian merchant Giovanni di Piero Martini. In his 1475 testament he expressed his wish that decoration of the chapel would be fulfilled as soon as possible. Therefore, construction of the chapel is supposed to have been finished promptly after his death, and this chapel was present in the church of San Giobbe at its consecration in 1493.

Giovanni Martini’s wife was a Salviati, which was an important Florentine family at the time; therefore, he maintained close ties with Firenze. Decoration orders for his chapel included glazed terracotta from Robbia’s workshop in Firenze (Fig.7). The medallion of Christ carrying the book adorned with alpha and omega is surrounded by four evangelists. This formation strongly recalls that of the dome in the main chapel.

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16 The influence of the Sacristy of San Lorenzo in Firenze by Brunelleschi was indicated. Pope-Hennecy, op. cit., p.422.
18 The chapel of Portuguese Cardinal of San Miniato al Monte in Firenze was mentioned as the model for the Martini chapel. John Pope-Hennessy, Luca della Robbia, Oxford, 1980, p.270.
An altarpiece of marble is located on the back wall. While Antonio Rossellino is suggested to be the executor for the triptych portion of the altarpiece, and especially for the figure of St. John the Baptist, the participation of Francesco di Simone Ferrucci is also indicated in the overall altarpiece design including the upper portion \(^{19}\) (Fig.8). In the triptych, St. Francis, St. John the Baptist, and St. Antonio of Padua are rendered from the left side. The figure in the middle is the patron saint of Giovanni Martini and lateral saints are the Franciscan friars, the colleague of the church administrators. Although the original work on the upper part of the altarpiece is unknown, Madonna and Child by Ferucci or some examples of Christ Dead have been examined as possibilities \(^{20}\). In any case, it can be said that the motives of Redemption and Salvation were chosen for the altarpiece, which were suitable for the Martini’s family chapel where descendents invoked mercy for their ancestry.

3. Altar of San Giobbe

The second altar on the right wall was dedicated to St. Job \(^{21}\). The San Giobbe altarpiece executed by Giovanni Bellini used to exist in this location \(^{22}\) (Fig.9). Although no documents exist which fix the date of this

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\(^{19}\) Gallo & Nepi Scirè, op.cit., pp.28-31. Stephan S. Wolohojian, Francesco di Simone Ferrucci’s Fogg ‘Virgin and Child’ and the Martini chapel in S. Giobbe, Venice, The Burlington Magazine, Vol.139, No.1137, 1997, pp.867-68. Today, a work that is different from the original is seen in the upper part of the Martini chapel altarpiece. In this article Wolohojian introduced John Pope-Hennessy’s suggestion that Ferucci’s Madonna and Child (now located at Fogg Museum) might be the original altarpiece work in the Martini chapel.

\(^{20}\) Note 19. Christ Child in Fogg Museum is rendered with goldfinch in his hand. It indicates the Passion of Christ and in turn the Redemption by His sacrifice. On the motif of Christ Dead, see Humfrey, op.cit., p.277.

\(^{21}\) On the dedication of the altar, see the description by G. Vasari. Giorgio Vasari, Le vite de’ più eccellenti pittori, scultori ed architetti scritte da Giorgio Vasari, pittore aretino con nuove annotazioni e commenti di Gaetano Milanesi, Firenze, 1878, Tomo III, p.155.

\(^{22}\) The San Giobbe altarpiece is now removed from the original frame. Fig. 9 shows one of the fotomontages. Several trials of the fotomontage exist. Here I cite the one by Rona Goffen. Rona Goffen, Giovanni Bellini, New Haven & London, 1989, p.152.
work, many art historians have discussed this problem via formal analysis or through historical surveys of San Giobbe church. In this article I suggest a dating of 1478 to 1483, which marks the middle portion of his career. It is important to note that during this time frame reconstruction of the main chapel by the Lombardo family was in progress and the Martini chapel was almost completed. Further, it can be said that at the time of consecration in 1493, the San Giobbe altarpiece already existed. This work, placed just in front of the Martini chapel, rendered the magnificently large-scale architecture in the background. It represents the illusionistic space continued from the actual frame which was probably constructed by the Lombardo’s workshop. Thus it appeared as if three chapels existed at the time of consecration in the nave of San Giobbe church.

III. The San Giobbe altarpiece by Giovanni Bellini

The San Giobbe altarpiece, now in Gallerie dell’Accademia in Venice, was certainly the most praised work in the former church of San Giobbe (Fig.10). It represents Madonna and child with saints, which was an

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24 For further discussion on the determination of this date, see Kagawa (Hoshi) Seiko, The San Giobbe altarpiece by Giovanni Bellini: A survey on the position of its architectural background in the contemporary Venetian altarpieces, Masters thesis presented to Keio University (in Japanese), 1998, pp. 29-31.

25 The right wall of the church was adjoined to the cloister of the monastery; therefore it was impossible to create a real chapel in that location. Humfrey, op.cit., p. 204. The influence of Masaccio’s Trinity on the left wall of the church of Santa Maria Novella in Firenze has been suggested by several art historians. Construction circumstances for Trinity in the church of Santa Maria Novella were very similar to those of the San Giobbe altarpiece. Ursula Schlegel, Observation on Masaccio’s Trinity Fresco in Santa Maria Novella, The Art Bulletin, IVV, 1963, pp.30-33, Julia Keydel, A Group of Altarpieces by Giovanni Bellini Considered in Relation to the Context for which They Were Made, PHD thesis, Harvard University, 1969, pp.158-159, Richardson, op.cit., pp.65-67, John Shearman, Only Connect .... Art and the Spectator in the Italian Renaissance, Oxford, 1992, pp.95-98.
extremely prominent theme among Venetian altarpieces in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Madonna was rendered majestically on the high throne, indicating her dignity as sedes sapientiae inhabited by the wisdom of God. She looks toward the entrance of the church and invites visitors. Her left hand shows the palm, which reminds us of the Madonna of the Annunciation26. As Baxandall presented27, this gesture is one of welcome or invite and is suitable for the Madonna who invites worshippers. The Christ Child sits on his mother’s lap and is rendered in nude, contrastively looking in an upwards direction. His delicate and fragile manner seems to indicate his future as the Lamb of God who sacrifice his body.

The saints surrounding the throne are (left to right) St. Francis, St. John the Baptist, St. Job, St. Dominic, St. Louis of Toulouse, and St. Sebastian28. Three angels playing instruments are found at the bottom of the throne. Bellini carefully arranged these figures in the composition. The heads of Madonna and the saints are disposed in a conic plan and this is repeated by both the form of the canopy above Madonna and the allocation of the angels playing instruments on the steps. This well-devised scheme brings about a sense of stability in the composition of the altarpiece.

These saints, including Madonna and Child, show explicit character and play their own roles. Francis is situated at the left side of the work; by

26 Giles Robertson, Giovanni Bellini, Oxford, 1968, p.87. The Annunciation by Leonardo da Vinci in Uffizi is recalled as an example of the Madonna in the same gesture. Baxandall followed the preachings of the fifteenth century friar Roberto Caracciolo da Lecce, who minutely explained Annunciation by dividing it in five steps. He showed that the preachings by Fra Roberto corresponded well with the fifteenth century Annunciations. The gesture of the San Giobbe Madonna showing her palm can be seen in the renderings of ‘disquiet’ and ‘inquiry’ Madonna which were illustrated in the aforementioned sermon. Michael Baxandall, Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy, 2nd ed., London, 1988, pp.48-56. Though Goffen and Richardson interpreted this gesture as the Hagiosoritissa (Madonna interceding) in the Byzantine Church, it is difficult to recognize that the gesture of this type, namely positioning both hands obliquely upward to Christ, and that of San Giobbe showing clear frontal attitude is the same. It might be hasty to interpret the left hand gesture of the San Giobbe Madonna as the intercessor’s one, although there is no doubt of her role as the mediate. Richardson, op.cit., pp.101, note72, Goffen, op.cit. S. Giobbe, p.57.

27 Baxandall, op.cit., pp.67-70.
looking downward and extending his right hand in the same direction, he invites the worshippers who kneel at the bottom of the altar. His left hand, by contrast, shows his stigma by pointing out a wound on his flank, further observed from a tear on his frock. This gesture is repeated by the Saviour on the throne.

Christ Child, being yet intact, points the flank with his left hand to imply his future wound which is the source of Salvation. The right hand of Christ, on the contrary, is directed toward Job’s praying hands. Job, the title saint of this altarpiece, is given the most honourable position to the immediate right of Madonna and Child, and is strongly connected to the Saviour by his gesture and the direction of his eyes.

John the Baptist and Louis of Toulouse mirror Job’s attitude. Both devotedly gaze at the Child, which seems to strengthen the prayers of Job.

Youthful Sebastian is at the right end of the work and is rendered in the nude, wearing only a breechcloth. He forms a counterpart for Job, the older saint. Both are the patron saints against the plague, and this indicates the background of the commission as a prayer for termination of the epidemic. St. Sebastian, devoted to his own meditation, also gazes downward and is connected to the worshippers who are invited by St. Francis.

Behind Sebastian, St. Dominic concentrates on reading and his pose is repeated by the lute-playing angel. Finally, the eyes of this angel lead our attention to the inscription on the step.

The direction of Dominic’s gaze leads viewers to the two angels looking upward. It is these angels’ eyes that are featured in this article (Fig. 11). Although the angels on the steps have been praised for their joyful appearances and their finely rendered instruments since the altarpiece

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28 Different views are expressed on the identification of St. Dominic and St. Louis. Here I follow the most common identifications.

29 Note that Francis is rendered showing the same gesture on the Martini triptych which is settled directly across the nave from the San Giobbe altarpiece.

30 The Gospel of John indicates that blood and water spurted from Christ’s wound on the flank. St. Augustine apprehended the blood as Redemption and the water as Baptism. He said the wound on Christ’s flank was ‘the gate to life.’ Augustine, Treatises on the Gospel of John, Tractate CXX.

31 This inscription shows just the name of the artist, ‘Iohannes Bellinus.’ There has been no suggestion of date.
debuted to the public\textsuperscript{32}, a few indications that they look at St. Job can be taken from the direction of their gazes\textsuperscript{33}. Observing these angels carefully, could it be said that they are gazing at St. Job? The angel at the top of the pyramid quite noticeably appears to be looking upward beyond Job. As this altarpiece was moved to a museum, it is impossible to evaluate the precise direction of the angels’ gazes; however, their eyes are directed to the right and in a notably upward fashion, namely in the direction of the original chancel.

The entrance of the main chapel in the chancel dedicated to St. Bernardino is composed of the triumphal arch. On the keystone of this arch we can find the key motif of the church decoration.

\textbf{IV. The Triumphal Arch of the Church of San Giobbe (Fig.12)}

The triumphal arch of San Giobbe, which separates the chancel and the nave, was created by Pietro Lombardo from 1471 to 1485 at the time of reconstruction of the church. While Pietro allegedly introduced the style of Renaissance architecture to Venice in the construction of the San Giobbe chancel, the iconography of the triumphal arch adhered fundamentally to the tradition of the Middle Ages. It is in this style that Madonna of the Annunciation and the archangel Gabriel are placed to the right and left sides of the arch, respectively\textsuperscript{34}. Above their heads is seen the emblem of Cristoforo Moro. It is rendered with Doge’s ‘corno’ which indicates that Cristoforo had already attained the position of Doge\textsuperscript{35}.


\textsuperscript{33} Schmidt, \textit{op.cit.}, p.41. Richardson, \textit{op.cit.}, p.29. Both Schmidt and Richardson noted the role of Job as the patron saint of music.

\textsuperscript{34} Masuda Tomoyuki, Iconographic Program of the East Wall of Agioi Anargyoi in Kastoria (in Japanese), \textit{The Study of the History of Art}, XLI, The Society of History of Art, Waseda University, 2003, p.78 note 28. This type of decoration can also be found in Italian churches. Ex. Padua, Scrovegni Chapel by Giotto.
On the centre of the bridge connecting Madonna and Gabriel, we find the dignified Christ Child lording over the church (Fig.13). The Child raises his left hand high above and holds apple-like fruit. His right hand, on the contrary, points below and seems to be blessing the Mass held there.

Especially notable is his clothing. A simple, sleeveless costume is rolled up above his stomach to expose his lower body. Though this intended exposure may seem strange today, it was not an uncommon representation in fifteenth century Christian art. Leo Steinberg discussed this problem minutely in his *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and Modern Oblivion*. Numerous examples enumerate the rendering of the ‘body’ of Christ both in Italy and northern Europe. This represents the words of the Gospel, ‘And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us’ (John 1:14). The Saviour was born in complete flesh in each detail, i.e., this is the visualization of the dogma of Incarnation, and the Incarnation of Christ happened at the moment of Annunciation when Mary received the Holy Ghost in her womb; therefore, the iconography of the triumphal arch clearly demonstrates the dogma of Incarnation. Then the Saviour incarnated as man would sacrifice his innocent body and accomplish the salvation of mankind.

Directly below the Christ Child on the church of San Giobbe triumphal arch we find the Lamb of God sacrificed for Redemption. This Lamb is directed toward the high altar; the altar is the place celebrating the Holy Communion. The incarnated body of Christ exists in the Host and the believers are given eternal life by communicating the Eucharist.

The point of this article is to state that the destination of the gaze of

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35 The same coat of arms is found on Cristoforo Moro’s tombstone on the floor of the chancel. Finotto, op.cit., p.39.
36 The winged Christ Child rendered here is the very rare iconographical type. I could only find one example in a Byzantine image which rendered the winged Christ Child in a medallion held by angels. This issue requires further research. Adolphe Napoleon Didron, *Christian iconography*, Vol.1, trans. by E.J. Millington, New York, 1965, first edition, 1851, pp.282-3.
38 Steinberg added the catalogue of the examples according to the iconographical type at the end of his writing. Steinberg, ibid., pp.109-216.
angels in the San Giobbe altarpiece is the Christ Child on the triumphal arch. When comparing the Christ Child on the triumphal arch with that from the San Giobbe altarpiece, several analogies are found. Both are rendered in the nude or in minimal cloth, thereby showing the incarnated body of God. The right hands of both are stretched downward to bless the worshippers. While the left hand of Christ on the triumphal arch holds an apple and loudly exhibits the Redemption of the sin committed by Adam, the Child in the San Giobbe altarpiece puts his left hand on his flank and indicates his future wound, the source of Redemption. It could be said that both images represent the Christology from Incarnation to Redemption.

As previously mentioned, an implication of Annunciation can be read in the San Giobbe altarpiece. On the golden apse mosaic above the saints, the Seraphim holding the disc inscribed with “Ave Gratia Plena” are represented. In the San Giobbe altarpiece, Annunciation suggesting the Incarnation of God is also advocated as with in the triumphal arch40.

Giovanni Bellini designed the gesture and the gaze of the saints in the altarpiece with scrupulous care. The gaze of St. Job and other saints leads spectators’ eyes to the Redeemer Christ on the throne, and the angels’ eyes guide them in the direction of the triumphal arch.

Let us review the history of the church. Cristoforo Moro, an important church patron after 1451, willingly promoted adoration for St. Bernardino of Siena and elevated the saint to the co-title saint of San Giobbe church.

39 Schiller noted that the dogma of Incarnation and that of Redemption are closely bound in Catholic theology. Gertrud Schiller, Iconography of Christian Art, Vol. 1, trans. by Janet Seligman, London, 1972, pp.4-6.

40 In the Republic of Venice, the feast of Annunciation (March 25) held special meaning. It was believed that on that day in 421, Venetian ancestors fled from the barbarian invasion, settled the cornerstone of their church at Rialto, and founded their country. Hence the implication of Annunciation in the San Giobbe altarpiece highlights the Incarnation of Christ and also the prestige of the Republic dwelling in Laguna on the same day. Much motive showing the dignity of the Republic can be found in the San Giobbe altarpiece: the Canopy above Madonna, the olive bunch, and the golden mosaic and the marble wall strongly evoke the Basilica of San Marco, the private chapel of the Doge. Giovanni Bellini, aware of San Giobbe interior arrangement in Renaissance style, chose to represent the apse in Veneto-Byzantine style in his altarpiece. This must have been the deliberate indication of the Basilica of San Marco. Goffen, op.cit. S. Giobbe, pp.62-64.
Further, the main chapel in the chancel was modified to become his funeral chapel dedicated to St. Bernardino. Hence St. Job, the original title saint of this church, was deprived of his honour as the title saint of the main chapel and conceded it to Bernardino due to the Cristoforo Moro’s intervention. The San Giobbe altarpiece is an extremely marvellous and grand-scale example of fifteenth and sixteenth century Venetian altarpieces. As Goffen mentioned, the San Giobbe altarpiece could be considered as the secondary main chapel, created by the perspective illusion on the wall to restore the honour of St. Job, which was deplumed in the main chapel. Thus, it would be assured that the San Giobbe altarpiece was created with a strong awareness of the actual main chapel. The angels on the steps gaze toward the chancel through St. Job, leading worshippers’ eyes to the Christ Child on the triumphal arch who represents Incarnation as the gate of Salvation. At the same time they also evoke the honour of the title saint for the main chapel, which should have been dedicated to St. Job.

V. Conclusion

As reviewed herein, the San Giobbe altarpiece represents the dogma of Incarnation begun with Annunciation and that of Redemption accomplished by the Sacrifice of Christ. Who receives this Salvation? Naturally it must be the patron of the altar who commissioned the altarpiece. Though no evidence indicates the identity of the patron and it is difficult to suggest a certain individual or group as the commissioner, it is very possible, as Goffen suggested, that the Scuola piccola di S. Giobbe (confraternity of St. Job) founded in 1383 and an unknown generous benefactor collectively ordered the altarpiece. The members of the confraternity, who had been serving the religion-charity complex of San Giobbe before the church was built, experienced their patron saint St. Job’s

title being forcibly removed from the main chapel to an altar in the nave during the fifteenth century. On this occasion, they must have commissioned an exceptionally glorious altarpiece to surpass the actual main chapel.

At the altar provided the San Giobbe altarpiece, funeral Masses were celebrated or members received Communion. According to Catholic theology, when the priest blesses the Host, it is transformed into the real body of Christ. This is the Christ Child rendered in the San Giobbe altarpiece and also is the Saviour lording over the entire church of San Giobbe from the triumphal arch to whom the angels in San Giobbe altarpiece lead our eyes.

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42 Goffen suggested that the description found in the inventory of the Scuola piccola di S.Giobbe in 1753, ‘una palla con suoi santi’, indicated the San Giobbe altarpiece and it is highly possible that this confraternity had been the patron of the altarpiece since it was commissioned. She also pointed out the coat of arms at the bottom of the marble pilaster of the altarpiece flame, representing the rearing horses. Although the family name for this coat of arms is yet to be identified, she considered it to represent the unknown patron who supported the confraternity. Goffen, op.cit. S. Giobbe, p.65.

43 Richardson emphasized the function of the San Giobbe altarpiece for funeral Mass. Richardson, op.cit., pp.71 fols.
Fig. 1 Giovanni Bellini, San Giobbe altarpiece, 1478-83c., Gallerie dell’Accademia, Venice.

Fig. 2 Church of San Giobbe, Venice.

Fig. 3 Inner view of the church of San Giobbe, Venice.

Fig. 4 Plan of the church of San Giobbe, Venice. (cited by Finotto, San Giobbe La Chiesa dei Santi Giobbe e Bernardino in Venezia, 2da ed., Verona, 1994, p.18.)

Fig. 5 Main chapel of the church of San Giobbe, Venice.
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Fig. 6 Main dome in the chancel, San Giobbe, Venice.

Fig. 7 Workshop of Andrea della Robbia, Ceiling decoration of the Martini chapel, 1471-76c., San Giobbe, Venice.

Fig. 8 Antonio Rossellino, Martini altarpiece, 1471-76c., marble, San Giobbe, Venice.

Fig. 9 Fotomontage of the San Giobbe altarpiece. (photomontage by Rona Goffen)
Fig. 10 Giovanni Bellini, San Giobbe altarpiece (detail)  
Fig. 11 Giovanni Bellini, San Giobbe altarpiece (Angels)  
Fig. 12 Workshop of Pietro Lombardo, Triumphal arch in the chancel, 1471-85, San Giobbe, Venice.  
Fig. 13 Workshop of Pietro Lombardo, Christ Child on the triumphal arch, San Giobbe, Venice.