

CATHOLIC COURIER

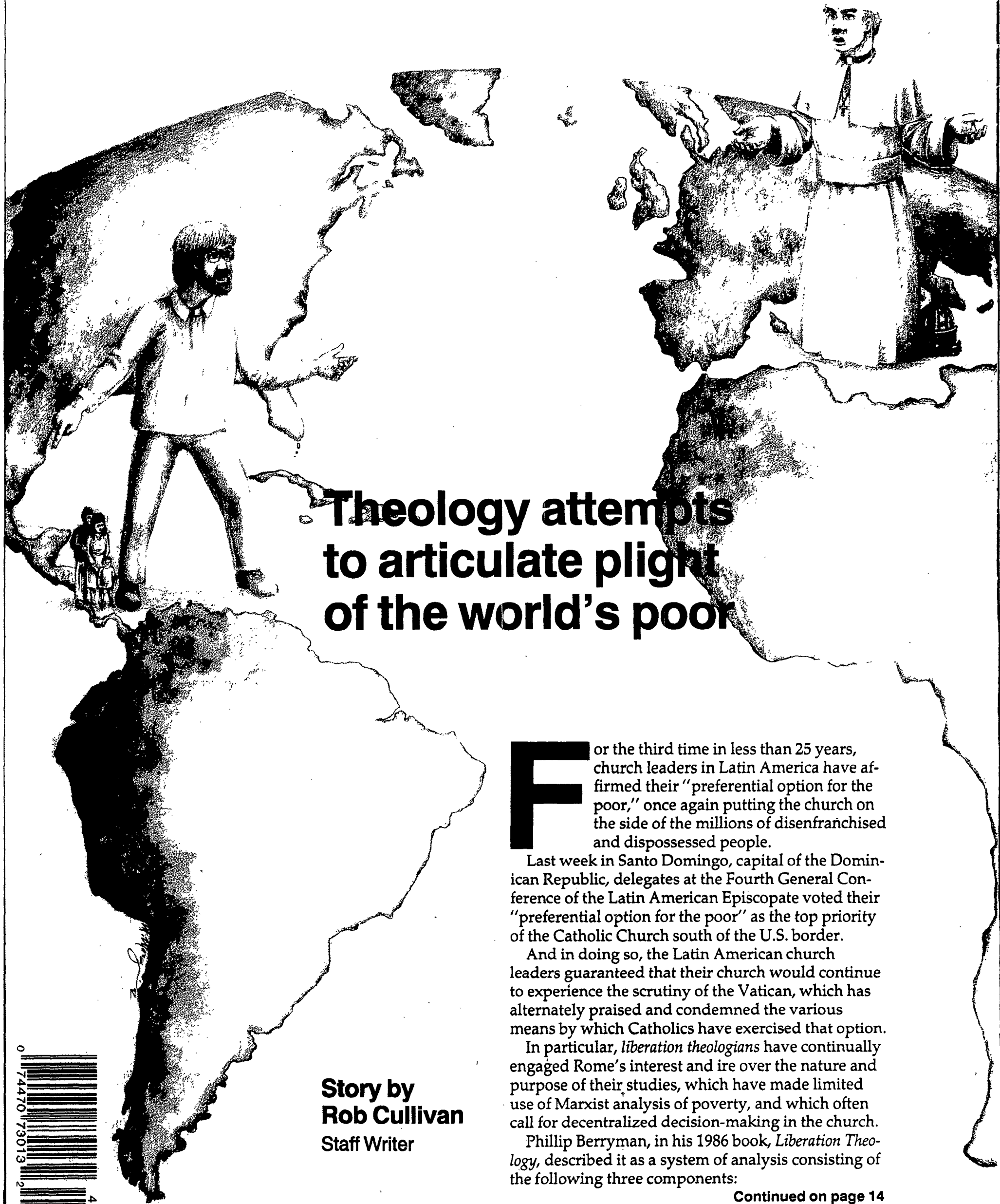
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Theology attempts to articulate plight of the world's poor

For the third time in less than 25 years, church leaders in Latin America have affirmed their "preferential option for the poor," once again putting the church on the side of the millions of disenfranchised and dispossessed people.

Last week in Santo Domingo, capital of the Dominican Republic, delegates at the Fourth General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate voted their "preferential option for the poor" as the top priority of the Catholic Church south of the U.S. border.

And in doing so, the Latin American church leaders guaranteed that their church would continue to experience the scrutiny of the Vatican, which has alternately praised and condemned the various means by which Catholics have exercised that option.

In particular, *liberation theologians* have continually engaged Rome's interest and ire over the nature and purpose of their studies, which have made limited use of Marxist analysis of poverty, and which often call for decentralized decision-making in the church.

Phillip Berryman, in his 1986 book, *Liberation Theology*, described it as a system of analysis consisting of the following three components:

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