

Church-State separation cited incorrectly

“Library of Congress display makes Bibles come alive” (CR, Aug. 27) begins by saying “Separation of church and state is enshrined in the U.S. Constitution.” This is patently incorrect. Rather the First Amendment affirms the freedom to worship as one pleases and the prevention of the establishment of a state-sponsored religion which was common in the colonies. That’s it! This widely-held canard dates to the 1947 case *Everson v. Board of Education* upholding New Jersey’s right to give funds to Catholic schools for textbooks and activities unrelated to religious propagation. In writing the majority opinion, Supreme Court Justice and ex-Ku Klux Klanner Hugo Black cited Jefferson’s 1802 letter to the Danbury Baptists about the existence of “a wall of separation” between church and state. Since then the phrase has been regularly cited in the press and court opinions as if it is in the Constitution. This is not a trivial issue since it is the basis for the very successful movement to remove God from the public square. If anyone should know this, Catholic journalists should.