Masonry and Civil Disobedience

When examining the participation of Freemasons in the War of the American Revolution we should first remember the Ancient Charges of a Freemason, and especially that charge concerning **“the Civil Magistrates, Supreme and Subordinate,”** which enjoins the Mason to be **“a peaceable subject to the Civil Powers**” and **“never to be concerned in plots and conspiracies against the peace and welfare of the nation.”** This charge was listed as the second of those contained in the Constitutions adopted by the Premier Grand Lodge at London in 1723, long before the American Revolution. How then does this fit into what has been considered over time as the single greatest act of Treason?

Of the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence, the number eight is usually accepted as the absolute minimum of Masons who signed the document. Though some evidence exists to show another 24 were Masons, it is not regularly accepted that they were Masons. Clearly, 13 of the 39 who signed the Constitution were members of Masonic lodges. General George Washington's staff looked like a Masonic convention. The list of American Masons in Washington's service included many of his Generals. Other revolutionary heroes included Patrick Henry, Nathan Hale, and John Paul Jones.

The Ancient Charges state clearly **“if a Brother should be a Rebel against the State … if convicted of no other Crime … they cannot expel him from the Lodge, and his Relation to it remains indefeasible.”** This means that, in the case of the American Revolution, many brethren, feeling that the actions of the crown warranted revolution and independence, were justified in following their consciences without fear of violating their Masonic obligations or any Masonic law.

I will support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic, that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same…

I swear by Almighty God that I will tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

I do solemnly and sincerely, promise and swear…