

Co. Donegal, near City of Londonderry, close of 18th Century (1791). His name had been spelled Rintoul until then. He adopted the spelling "Rentoul" to be in keeping with his friend, the Rev. Robert Rentoul (see above) of Ballykelly. This Rev. James Rentoul was a man of many and varied parts, of great eloquence, and a natural leader of men. He was of splendid physique, standing six-feet two, and built in proportion.

Many stories are still told along the "Lagan Valley" of his deeds of courage and endurance in those lawless times. When a Licentiate of the Presbytery of Perth (the Presbyteries of that day being very arbitrary and generally sending their best Licentiates, whether they wished it or not, to the posts of peril and difficulty) he was commissioned, sorely against his will, to repair to Ulster for the purpose of organizing and strengthening "the cause" there. Young Rentoul's father had been of the party that "came out" from the Church of Scotland along with the Erskines. The "Synod of Ulster" of the Church of Scotland in Ireland was at that time largely saturated with Socinianism. It was the aim of the "Secession" or Erskine party in Scotland to counteract this influence by establishing a strongly Secession Element in Ireland. To this work young Rentoul was commissioned. The Secession Element was then divided into "Burgher" Synod and "Anti-Burgher" Synod, and Rentoul was appointed to the Church of "Ray," Manorcunningham, at that time the largest "Anti-Burgher" congregation in Ulster. From the first he bent his energies to bring about union between the discordant forces of the Secession movement; and when, largely owing to his influence, the union between the "Burgher" and "Anti-Burgher" Synods took place in 1818, thus forming the powerful "Secession Synod of Ireland," the Rev. James Rentoul was unanimously chosen first Moderator (President) of the united body. This Secession body of Presbyterians in Ireland undoubtedly did much,