The thesis of this book is that, when the New Testament authors quoted from the Minor Prophets, they had “the Twelve” in mind and not just the particular book. In a brief introduction (1–4) we are shown how ancient authors and biblical scrolls regarded the books as a collection, along with evidence for compositional seams between the individual books. Chapter 1 then begins with Paul’s use of Hos 2:1, 25 in Rom 9:25–26, and Doug Moo is selected as representative of the view that Paul interprets the text in the light of the Christ-event. Hosea speaks of the renewal of the northern tribes, but Paul’s “hermeneutical key” allows him to see in these words a veiled reference to the church. Shepherd rejects this, stating that neither Paul nor any other New Testament writers mentions such a “hermeneutical key.” He deduces from this that the “New Testament authors encourage their readers to understand their quotations according to the verbal meaning or authorial intention of the original authors. The meaning they see is really present in the text itself” (8). I have two problems with this. First, in the light of Shepherd’s thesis, it is strange to see him referring to the author’s original intention. It is precisely this focus that has led many scholars to deduce that Paul’s meaning is often very different from the original meaning. Second, there is now a significant amount of work (Hays, Wagner, Wright) to suggest that Paul read texts in the light of the Christ-event...
and drew on specific details of the text. It is pity that this study begins with the assumption that they are mutually exclusive.

How, then, does Shepherd deal with Paul’s quotation? He first notes that it is difficult to find a passage in Hosea where the readoption of Israel is equated with the adoption of Gentiles, but such a link can be found in Deut 32 and Isa 65. He then argues that the restoration of Israel in Hos 3:4–5 is “at the end of the days,” and this is picked up in the Amos-Obadiah-Jonah sequence that follows. He does not demonstrate this by analyzing these texts but notes that this is how James understood Amos 9:12 in Acts 15:17 and Jesus understood Jonah 2:1 in Matt 12:40. He then argues that Jesus respected the context of Hos 6:6 (Matt 9:13; 12:7) and 10:8 (Luke 23:30) and that Matthew correctly understood the eschatological meaning of Hos 11:1 (“out of Egypt I called my son”). The evidence for the latter takes the form of a polemical rebuttal of the arguments of Dan McCartney and Peter Enns against his mentor, John Sailhamer. Shepherd then summarizes his view that Hos 3:4–5 (a text not quoted in the New Testament!) speaks of a time without a king followed by the days of the messianic king and shows how this theme (along with new exodus from Hos 2:16–17) runs through the rest of the Minor Prophets. Finally, we return to Paul with his quotation of Hos 13:14 in 1 Cor 15:55. Commentators who support Paul’s contextual use of Scripture usually take Hos 13:14 in the positive sense of restoration and then argue that Paul assumes that the conquering of death in Isa 25:8 carries over to Hos 13:14. Shepherd wants to go further: “How would the hope of a renewed state of Israel in which the reader would not actually take part be of any comfort?” (25). He concludes that Hos 13:14 really is talking about the victory of resurrection, as Paul states.

Chapter 2 looks at quotations from Joel to Micah; I will pick out the use of Joel in Acts 2 to further exemplify Shepherd’s approach (I hesitate to call it a method). He says that there are three main questions that require an answer. The first is whether Pentecost should be seen as an exhaustive fulfillment of Joel. His answer is that it should not, since Peter says in his second speech that “times of refreshing” are still to come (Acts 3:20). The second is whether Paul’s understanding of salvation in Rom 10:13 differs from what is said in Joel 2:28–32. He does not think this needs an answer and simply asserts that “there is no reason to think that salvation in Paul is different from salvation in Joel unless the reader creates a false dichotomy between physical deliverance and spiritual deliverance” (31). The third question is the only one that receives more than a sentence or two of discussion, and that concerns the link between the giving of the law (associated in Jewish tradition with Pentecost) and the Spirit. We are taken through Exod 16, Num 11, and Neh 9 to show that a “precedent of some sort exists within the Hebrew Bible for the New Testament view of the Spirit in relationship to the law” (37).
Chapter 3 does much the same with the quotations from Nahum to Malachi. Thus Matthew does not use Zech 11:13 to support Judas’s betrayal but the “dismissal of the good shepherd (Jesus) by the people (represented by the chief priests)” (59). One might have thought that Matthew’s ascription of this quotation to Jeremiah would undermine Shepherd’s thesis, but he has an answer: Matthew probably understood Jeremiah to be the author of Zech 9–14. What I cannot understand is why Shepherd feels the need to give one-line answers to such complex textual phenomena. Apart from the two appendices, where his approach is extended to Isaiah and Jeremiah (because modern scholars treat them as composite), the book consists of only seventy-eight pages. Was Shepherd under some publishing constraint to discuss all thirty quotations from the Minor Prophets in such a short space?

I close with what I regard as the most interesting of his suggestions: the use of Hab 2:4 by Paul and the author of Hebrews. Shepherd begins by noting that the text falls between the eschatological theophanies of Nah 1:2–8 and Hab 3:3–15. He then points out that the issue faced by Habakkuk is encapsulated in Hab 1:5, which he describes as a temptation to “lack faith” (לא בהメイン) in the “work” (מעל) of God. Next, the message of Hab 2:1–4 is shown to be eschatological by the use of מועד (“appointed time”) and כף (“the end”), terms taken up in Dan 10–12. Now Hab 2:4 is linked to 1:5 not only by the repetition of the root כף, which Shepherd thereby understands to mean “faith” rather than “faithfulness,” but also by the strange use of נפל (“to swell”), which reverses the first two consonants of נפל (“work”). Finally, Habakkuk confesses that he has “feared” God’s work (3:2), and Shepherd argues that “fear” and “believe” fall within the same semantic field. He concludes that “the composition of Habakkuk is about justification by faith in the eschatological and messianic work of God” (51), and this is precisely Paul’s meaning, which he quotes from the Hebrew (the omission of the pronoun is “probably inconsequential”). However, the LXX is a “complete misunderstanding” of the Hebrew text and offers a “contrast between the apostate with whom the Lord is displeased and the faithful believer” (53–54), precisely the theme of Hebrews. But if one thinks that this undermines the claim that the New Testament authors had the whole Minor Prophets scroll in mind, Shepherd says that a “quotation from a non-original biblical text is not a text-critical statement on what the author thinks is the original text” (52). We are left to ponder what Shepherd thinks of all the other quotations in the New Testament where the LXX differs from the Hebrew.

What I find interesting about this example is that, while it is not difficult to imagine a Jewish scribe making such connections, it is impossible to imagine any of Paul’s readers deducing this from the Greek text of Romans or Galatians. Of course, Paul’s knowledge of the scriptures was far greater than that of his readers, so it could be argued that this is how Paul reached his conclusions, even though he did not communicate any of this to his
readers. But then this becomes an argument from silence. There is no evidence in Paul’s letters that he deduced the meaning of Hab 2:4 by combining it with 1:5 and 3:2, so why should we believe it? For Shepherd, the answer is that Scripture has one single meaning: the meaning intended by God that was fully communicated to the biblical author (28 n. 38). To my mind, the very difference that Shepherd highlights between Paul’s use of Hab 2:4 and that which is found in Hebrews suggests that such a doctrine is too simplistic.