Egyptian Primary Sources: Religion & the Afterlife

Hymn to Amon-Re

Background:
Ancient Egyptian society reached a high point after 1700 BCE. Their pharaoh was revered as a god-king on earth who unified the great empire, and by 1500 the primary god of Egypt was Amon-Re. He was a combination of the god of wind (Amon) and the sun god (Re). The Hymn to Amon-Re (a religious song or chant) was composed between 1500 and 1350 BCE, at the height of Egypt’s imperial greatness. As you read, look for clues about Egyptian attitudes towards their gods.

| Adoration of Amon-Re, chief of all gods, the good god, the beloved who gives life to all that is warm and to all good cattle. |
| Hail to thee, Amon-Re… |

The lord of truth and father of the gods.  
Who made mankind and created the beasts,  
Lord of what is, who created the fruit tree,  
Made vegetation and gave life to cattle.  
The good spirit whom Ptah [another creator god] made.  
The good beloved youth to whom the gods give praise,  
Who made what is below and what is above,  
Who illuminates the Two Lands [Upper and Lower Egypt]  
And crosses the heavens in peace.  
The King of Upper and Lower Egypt: Re, the triumphant,  
Chief of the Two Lands,  
Great of strength, lord of reverence,  
The chief one, who made the entire earth.  
More distinguished in nature than any other god, in whose beauty the gods rejoice.
An Egyptian Pyramid Text (2333 BCE)

Background:
The following is a selection from a group of pyramid texts, which were inscribed on the walls of a royal tomb as spells, incantations, or prayers to assist the pharaoh in entering the afterlife. This one is from the tomb of the pharaoh Teti, who ruled roughly between 2345 and 2333 BCE. As you read, look for clues about how the Egyptians envisioned the afterlife.

Oho! Oho! Rise up, O Teti!
Take your head, collect your bones,
Gather your limbs, shake the earth from your flesh!
Take your bread that does not rot, your beer that does not spoil,
Stand at the gates that bar the common people!

The gatekeeper comes out to you, he grasps your hand,
Takes you into heaven, to your father Geb.
He rejoices at your coming, gives you his hands,
Kisses you, caresses you,
Sets you before the spirits, the imperishable stars...

The hidden ones worship you,
The great ones surround you,
The watchers wait on you,
Barley is threshed for you,
Emmer [another variety of wheat] is reaped for you,
Your monthly feasts are made with it...

Rise up, O Teti, you shall not die!